

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST 1, 1871.

DENE HOLLOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

MISS EMMA GEACH.

THERE was discord at Beechhurst Dene. Christmas week—that is, the week following Christmas—is generally regarded as one intended to be social and festive; but this one at Beechhurst Dene was especially unpleasant. The days, as they went on, were full of discomfort; each day worse than the last. The Lady Lydia seemed to be doing her work well—that of getting Tom Clanwaring out of the house. Not only out of the house and neighbourhood did she intend to send him, but out of the country. She was devoting her whole energies, her great influence, to the task. Circumstances favoured her in rather a remarkable degree, as will be seen presently: they were to favour her more ere the week should be out. Dissension reigned. It was the whole household against Tom, and Tom against the household. Some insults were put upon him that stung him into retort. Petty charges were brought against him: trifles in themselves, but magnified into grave offences by the manner in which they were repeated to Sir Dene Clanwaring; and in these might lie just enough of truth to render them plausible, and at any rate hard to disprove. Graver charges were soon to be whispered—and Tom might not have been able to refute them, even had the opportunity been allowed him. But it was not.

Sir Dene was keeping his room. Full of pain, both of mind and body, he was more irritable than he had ever been known to be. His anger against Tom, for having absented himself and gone to Simmons's (as he was led to think) on Christmas Evening, rankled within him. He felt too vexed, too proud it may be said, to speak of it to Tom: and Tom, knowing nothing and suspecting nothing, could not of course

refute it. Be you very sure Lady Lydia did not—and therefore the false impression remained with Sir Dene. The new feeling against Tom was augmented by these other charges : they rankled in the baronet's mind also ; and there was great discomfort. Never for a moment was Tom allowed to be alone with Sir Dene : Lady Lydia with her specious contrivance managed that—and nobody suspected there was any contrivance in it ; least of all, Tom.

One day Tom was stung into retaliation. He was insolent to Lady Lydia, he retorted on Captain Clanwaring, he took something like a high tone with his grandfather. The lion within him was aroused at last ; the patient bearing of years, the calm enduring, gave way before a moment's passion. It was his grandfather's changed manner to him that stung him into this—not the insults of the others. Had Sir Dene brought any specific charge against him, Tom could have answered it quietly : but nothing of the kind was done ; and, all the young man knew and saw was, that his grandfather at length turned against him, out of, as it seemed, very caprice. But the grievous state of worry this disturbed condition of things kept Sir Dene in, can be better imagined than described.

The private arrangements Lady Lydia had been engaged in, succeeded. They were now complete, ready to be acted upon ; and she disclosed the matter to Sir Dene. She had been negotiating with some of her relatives in Ireland, and had got Tom an appointment there to manage the land of a large estate. It was really a good post of its kind, and the salary would be fair. To a young man seeking an opening in life it certainly was an opportunity not often to be met with.

Nevertheless, Sir Dene turned a deaf ear. The very idea of Tom's leaving Beechhurst Dene startled him.

"I'd not like it, my lady," was his short, imperative answer. And by the words "my lady" it might be known that he felt resentment to her, rather than gratitude.

She was not to be put down for that. She pointed out how excellent the chance was, how fitted Tom was for the post, and how great the returning peace his departure would bring to the Dene. She had even found a man able and willing to replace Tom on the estate : one Mr. Weston : a humble cousin of the Miss Dickereens, who would be glad of the post.

But no : Sir Dene wholly negatived it. Dining at the gamekeeper's on Christmas Day, and turning on the household since when they quarrelled with him, did not constitute sufficient offence to entail banishment, he said. Lady Lydia sighed and bit her lip, mentally telling herself that she must have a little patience yet, but that, *go*, Tom should. Little did even she think how very soon it would be.

There's an old axiom—that people rarely accomplish any great amount of evil alone. Two certainly can do more harm than one. Wil

beasts hunt in couples. It takes two to quarrel and fight; it takes two to make an evil bargain. When a man commits a murder, or a succession of murders, the first public thought is—he must have had a helping companion. Thus, in the ill-odour that latterly had attached itself to Miss Emma Geach, the discerning neighbours had been, not so much asking whether she had a help-mate in ill-doing—that went for a matter of course—as speculating who that help-mate might be. Whatever it was she had done, or was suspected of—whether she poached game as Black did, or robbed a house, or set a church on fire—the fact of her having had an aider and abettor was very sure and certain. Public curiosity was always on the whet as to who this other might be: and the untoward circumstance, that no one in particular could be fixed upon, was, to say the least, mortifying. Harry Cole the farrier and veterinary surgeon—a good-looking, fairly-well-educated man, who had succeeded to his father's business—would be talked of one day; Sir Dene's groom, James, the next; a smuggling acquaintance of Black's who was often at the Trailing Indian, the third, and others: but when the utmost grounds of suspicion attaching to any one of these men came to be summed up, it was found to consist of one sole fact—that they might be seen on occasion openly talking and laughing with Miss Emma. Not quite enough, this, to justify an accusation of arson, or what not. So that, in point of fact, the tantalized public considered themselves ill-used in the matter, and kept their eyes and their curiosity agape.

Seeing Tom Clanwaring perched on the table at the Trailing Indian, familiarly located there with Mr. and Mrs. Black and Miss Emma, would have been nothing: young Dene might have done as much himself, for he had just the same sociable kind of nature, for sitting on tables, or elsewhere, as Tom: but taken in conjunction with the private meeting and whispering between Tom and Emma Geach on Christmas night, that both Dene and Otto had been a witness to, it looked like something. The interview in the grove wore all the appearance of a secret one, of premeditation: and if young Dene joked a bit about the look of things, and Otto nodded assent in his steady manner, it was not to be surprised at. They had taken up the notion that Tom might have been the man who had helped to—fire the church, let's say. Not that he *was*, they did not go so far as that; only that he might have been. Certain things were laughed and joked over more freely in those days than they are in these; were, in fact, regarded as but venial errors. Dene talked and laughed about it indoors: and soon the only members of the household to whose ears the new suspicion had not penetrated, were Tom himself, Lady Lydia, and Sir Dene.

Strange to say, the sole one to reprove was Jarvis. "Hold your foul tongues!" cried he savagely. "Any way, it's no concern of

yours." Which reproof only set Dene laughing worse than before. And thus the week progressed, each day bringing more of discomfort and drawing matters nearer to a crisis. On the Thursday, Dene the heir and his brother Charles took their departure for Scotland, to spend New Year's Day with their mother.

Friday came in, a morning bright with sunshine. The snow, threatened on the Monday, had cleared itself off without falling, and the weather was really lovely. Somewhat frosty; but calm, fresh, and clear.

Talking together over the low gate of the narrow side avenue leading to Arde Hall, stood Tom Clanwaring and the Hall's heiress; she inside, he out. As he was passing up from Hurst Leet, she happened to be there in her scarlet-hooded cloak and white muff, the hood of the cloak drawn round her bright face and bright brown curls. Fashions changed less capriciously then than they do now—or perhaps economy made things last longer. Tom's mother had worn just the same kind of cloak; but the cloaks had not gone quite out, even yet. There they stood: Tom oblivious of his business, May of the passing of time.

"I'm so glad he's better," said May, alluding to Sir Dene—for Tom had been telling her that his grandfather was downstairs again. "Mr. Priar came in to tea last night and was talking about him. He thinks he is changing so very much."

"He has certainly changed in the last few days, for he has been irritable with me without cause—that is, when he notices me at all," replied Tom. "For the most part he turns his head away from me, and when I speak gives me short and snappish answers."

"Have you offended him?" asked May.

"I suppose so: but I cannot imagine how. Altogether I have not had a pleasant week of it, May. They are trying me tolerably hard just now."

He laughed as he said it. Sunshine was always in his heart, let be what would. The young make light of troubles. May Arde's sweet brown eyes sparkled brightly in sympathy.

"When people are ill, they feel cross without knowing why, Tom. I suppose Dene and Charley have gone?"

"They started yesterday morning."

"I like Dene. Charley too, for that matter. But I like Dene better than—yes, better than anybody else at Beechhurst Dene," she added, casting a saucy glance at the handsome face bending towards hers. "Dene is always—oh Tom, look here!"

A clatter and commotion in the road caught her ear, and the glittering silver of the sumptuous Clanwaring liveries her eye. The Beechhurst Dene cortège was approaching at a gallop. It was the custom then to pay morning calls in more state than royalty observes now. Two outriders rode first; and then came the large carriage with

its four horses, and the postilions' jackets laced with silver, harmonizing with the liveries of the outriders and the two standing footmen behind. Sir Dene did not drive four in hand. Tempted by the fineness of the day, my Lady Lydia had come out visiting; her daughter, Mrs. Letsom, sat next her, Jarvis and Otto opposite.

"Tom, I do *believe* they are coming to the Hall!" cried May under her breath.

Even so. The outriders took the sweep round that would bring them to the carriage entrance, running nearly side by side with the narrow beech avenue. Knowing, or suspecting, the feeling obtaining in Lady Lydia's mind towards them, both Tom Clanwaring and May might have preferred to get out of sight, had there been means of doing it; but the trees were bare in winter, affording no shelter. As the carriage swept round like lightning almost close to them, Tom lifted his hat to Lady Lydia and Mrs. Letsom. My lady answered the courtesy by a hard stare.

"What a pace they are going at!" exclaimed Tom. "Shall you have to go in, May?"

"Oh I must. Of course I must. Toin, he has been here every day this week," she cried in impulsive agitation, her bright eyes lifted for a moment, and then cast down again. "Every blessed day, as Susan phrases it. And mamma is beginning to like him so very much!"

"Every day, has he," returned Tom, pushing back the breast of his velveteen coat, as if he were too hot.

"I would not come down to him one day: Susan was in such a temper over it. Papa and mamma were out, and so I could do as I liked. When's he going away to join his regiment again?"

"I don't know, May. He will have to do it soon, I should imagine, or else leave it altogether."

"I'm sure he has got up his strength quite enough now."

"Strength?—oh it's not that, May. There's an attraction in the way. If he joined his regiment, he could not come down here at will."

May understood quite well—that she was the attraction. Deep in thought now, she was looking away, seeing nothing.

"I wish I had not any money of my own!" she whispered, really more to herself than to Tom. "It's that miserable twenty thousand pounds of mine. Perhaps he'd not care for me without that. If my dear little sister had but lived, it would never have been mine."

"True," said Tom.

"Susan Cole used to tell me when I was naughty, that Master Tom—meaning you—would never care for me as he did for that little sister," went on the young lady.

"Did she?" said Tom, a great merriment in his deep-set blue eyes, so marvellously beautiful. "I loved that child dearly: I remember it still. I must have been very old when she died, May: nearly four."

"I *must* go ; or they'll be sending for me," cried Miss May, shrinking from the expression of the said eyes. "Good-bye. To-morrow's New Year's Day, you know. Don't forget it."

"No danger," replied Tom Clanwaring. "Good-bye, May."

An ordinary shake of the hands, and away went Tom, striding quickly to make up for lost time.

"New Year's Day," that May had reminded him of, implied a meeting. A meeting for them. Just as it had grown into a custom for the Ardes to eat their Christmas dinner at Beechhurst Dene, so had it for the Clanwarings to dine at the Hall on the first day of the new year. If nobody else looked forward with a heart-spring to the morrow's festive gathering, the two who had just parted did. Parted reluctantly—for they would have liked to linger away the whole morning together.

Rather surprised was Tom, upon going up Dene Hollow, to see a few people congregated there ; half a dozen, or so. A cart had come to grief on nearly the old unlucky spot. It could not this time be charged on the "Shadow." The linchpin had disappeared from one of the wheels ; and the cart, which had contained grains (on their way to be conveyed to Mr. Tillett's pigs), was overturned. The sweet-smelling grains lay scattered on the highway ; Hodge, Mr. Tillett's waggoner—for the cart was Mr. Tillett's—standing by with a most rueful face.

The accident had occurred just as the Beechhurst Dene cortège was passing ; it had startled the carriage horses, and sent them flying downwards at such a rate as to put the outriders to the gallop, and threaten another accident. Lady Lydia, ignoring chances, always went the way of Dene Hollow when she could : its level road and fair scenery were pleasant to her.

"Which accounts for the sharp pace they came round at," thought Tom as he listened to this, and recalled the speed of the horses.

Leaving the cart and grains to their unhappy fate, he pursued his way, and turned into Harebell Farm. Not to tell of the disaster particularly, but because he had some business with its master, Philip Tillett. Mr. Tillett however was not at home, and Tom stayed a few minutes talking with Mary Barber.

For Mary Barber, the thoroughly capable and earnest-minded woman—somewhat hard and superstitious though she might be—had never quitted Harebell Farm. William Owen did not want her when he migrated to his new home : he meant to marry ; and did do so shortly afterwards : and Mary Barber remained with Mr. Tillett and his motherless young daughter. She was called housekeeper, but was treated and respected as one of the family ; having two maids under her, instead of one as in Mrs. Owen's time. When Tom went in she was seated in the parlour, hemming a white cravat of Mr. Tillett's.

"Bless my heart!" she exclaimed, staring at Tom through her tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles when he told the news. "The wheel off, and all the pigs' food a-lying in the road!"

"Every grain of it," said Tom. "Cole's man had got the wheel in hand, beginning to tinker it up."

"The wheel baint much. The grains is the worst. And for you to be a-laughing over it, Mr. Tom!"

"Oh they'll get the grains up again. You'd laugh yourself, if you had seen it, Mary Barber. Hodge's face was better than a picture."

"There's no luck with our pigs this year," lamented she. "I said so to the master the t'other day. That last lot o' wash, made for 'em, got put into a new-painted barrel, through one o' the men's carelessness, and a'most pisoned the pigs."

"Only not quite," put in Tom, always looking on the sunniest side of things.

"Well now, Mr. Tom—what caused the mishap to-day?"

"Why, I told you, Mary. The wheel came off the cart."

"'Twarn't that, sir."

"But it was that," returned Tom, looking at her.

"'Twarn't that," came the emphatic repetition. "'Twas the Shadow."

"Nonsense! Rubbish!"

The retort nettled Mary Barber. The Shadow was there, and would be always there, she said solemnly: and she put it to him plainly whether horses were, or were not, in the habit of starting at that place. Tom, half laughing, confessed they were, saying no more about the cart-wheel, intending to drop the argument altogether. Not so Mary Barber. Laying down the cravat and her spectacles on the table, she bent her face a little forward.

"What is it that frightens the animals, pray? Tell me that if you can, Mr. Tom."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Tom, "unless it's the shadow of the branches, cast on the road by the sun."

"It's not that, sir; you must know it's not. The shadow's one of another sort. I give it a different name in my own mind."

"What name?"

"A curse."

"A curse!"

"A curse," she repeated in her solemn tone. "Why, what else is it, sir? Hasn't it been as a curse to a good many folk? Sir Dene couldn't have thought it nothing less when he saw his blooming grand-child a-lying dead afore him."

Tom made no rejoinder now. His cousin Margaret's sad death had indeed brought grievous sorrow. To none worse than to him. To him, who had been the one to pick Margaret up.

"We thought it was the ice that made the horses slip. There was ice on the road, you remember, Mary Barber."

"Bother the ice," irreverently responded Mary Barber. "'Twas the excuse made, I know : but who believed it?"

Very few, Tom might have answered—had he chosen. Mary Barber resumed; her voice impressive again, hardly raised above a whisper.

"That time when my poor mother spoke to me o' the shadow—dying she was, though I didn't see it—it sounded but like so much gibberish in my two ears. But that I knowed her to be sane, I'd ha' thought her mind was a-rambling. The next day, when she was dead, the words come back to me in a different way : for I've been a good deal with the dead and dying, Mr. Tom, and I know that what they speak just afore the soul departs is sometimes like a prophecy. And as I stood at her grave i' the churchyard while the parson was reading the bur'al over her out o' the Prayer-book, and thought o' what it was that had sent her to it afore her time, there come into my mind a kind o' light. A light o' conviction, one might call it : that mother's dying words were true—and that a curse lay on the fine new road that had killed her. It's a-lying there to this day."

The less superstitious and more practical among the neighbours were apt to smile at this fixed belief of Mary Barber's and call it her "crotchet." Her master, Mr. Tillett, a man of good sound sense, told her to her face that she would go mad upon the foolish point some day, if she didn't take care. Perhaps Tom Clanwaring shared Mr. Tillett's scepticism, for he took up his hat to depart without comment of any sort.

"Tell the master I'll look in again to-morrow, Mary Barber. If he'll consent to make the alteration, Sir Dene will go half way in the cost. But we must have an answer. Good day."

Meanwhile the Lady Lydia paid her visits, a round of them. Mrs. Arde's was the only one near home; the rest lay at a distance. While the afternoon was still bright, the outriders came cantering round the corner by Cole the farrier's, and took the old hilly road that led to Beechhurst Dene, the nearest way from whence they were coming. The carriage followed close upon the outriders; and my lady, inside it, felt tired to death. As it whirled round the corner—rather a sharp turn, that, by Cole's—two people stood talking outside the forge—having met accidentally a minute before. Tom Clanwaring was one; his occupation had taken him to some land that lay out there : the other was Miss Emma Geach. A traveller, whose horse became suddenly disabled, had rode in for refuge at the Trailing Indian, and the girl was despatched to fetch Cole. Nothing loth, she : especially as she seized on the opportunity to attire herself in her Sunday-going things.

A gay gipsy hat upon her abundant hair, gleaming and glistening in the winter sunlight, and some blue ribbons flying amidst it, stood she.

Otto Clanwaring looked from the carriage and made some remark to his brother in a low tone. Not so low, however, but that its sense struck on the ear of Lady Lydia.

"What?" she exclaimed. "What's that you say, Otto?"

He answered by a light word or two, as if the matter he spoke of were of no serious moment. Assuredly he did not do it in ill-nature. "I don't affirm it, you know," he said: "but appearances certainly are against Tom."

Ay, they were, unfortunately. A dusky red light, telling of emotion, shone in my lady's dark face: she leaned out, and looked back. Tom was striding onwards then, and Miss Geach was exchanging compliments with Cole. The disclosure struck her quite as a revelation. She had shared the curiosity of the public as to the doings of Miss Emma Geach. Otto would have dismissed the subject with a few careless words.

"What are your proofs, Otto?" she asked, leaning forward to speak in his ear.

"Proofs? Oh, I don't know about proofs," was the answer, still carelessly indifferent. And then he just mentioned what he and young Dene had seen.

My lady was virtuously indignant—of course. To do her justice, she believed the story: and began talking of it in private with her eldest son when they got home.

"Let it drop," said Jarvis, curtly.

"Drop!" she retorted. "I'll let it drop when I have told Sir Dene. He can let it drop if he will."

"Confound it, madam! can't you hold your tongue?" savagely cried Jarvis.

"No, I can't, Jarvis. This was just what was wanted to get the fellow away."

"Eh? what?" returned Jarvis, a sudden gleam awakening in his sly dark eyes.

"Why, don't you see that it is? I knew how worthless he must be; but the difficulty was to bring proofs of it to Sir Dene."

Jarvis drew a long breath. He began to discern a little light of way. Lady Lydia resumed.

"Putting all other considerations aside, Sir Dene *could* not allow him to remain here now. It seems quite like a Providence, Jarvis. I thought something or other would turn up. It's what I've been waiting for."

Not until the following day, the first of the new year, did Lady Lydia get the opportunity of conveniently speaking to Sir Dene. Their interview was a long one. What she said at it never was known, but we may be quite sure of one thing, that she did not tell her tale by halves. Otto—to his own intense disgust—was called in to testify to it.

"I'll be shot if I'd have dropped a word to her had I thought she

was going to make this row over it, and do him damage with the old man!" mentally cried Otto in wrath. But—always speaking the truth if called upon to speak at all—he corroborated all, so far as he had cognizance of it. It appeared to be conclusive to Sir Dene: as might be seen by the look of utter sorrow on his pale face. In spite of all, he had loved Tom; had trusted him utterly; and this struck upon him as a cruel blow, rendering him unjust. What he ought to have done was to question Tom himself: and this he did not. His outraged pride, worked upon also by Lady Lydia, forbade it.

How the day went on, even Lady Lydia hardly knew. Never had one of greater unpleasantness been spent at Beechhurst Dene. Tom came in during the afternoon: and Jarvis picked a quarrel with him. For once he succeeded in putting Tom in a passion—and there were rare moments, as was previously said, when Tom could go into a passion with the best of them. When he was in this white heat, Jarvis unwisely (or wisely as the reader may decide) ventured on a word of insult more stinging than customary. In his cool, supercilious, contemptuous manner, he threw in Tom's teeth a reproach of the accusation they were whispering against him. It was but a hint, a syllable; but quite enough: Tom Clanwaring lifted his hand and knocked the gallant officer down. Sir Dene was a witness to it: it occurred in his own bay parlour, which he was just entering. That brought on the climax. Smarting under one thing and another, Tom the scapegoat appeared in that moment to Sir Dene as a very offshoot of Satan; and he swore a round oath that he should be out of Beechhurst Dene before night. The Lady Lydia had received an opportune letter that very morning, urging Tom Clanwaring's immediate acceptance of the post offered him, or else it must be given away elsewhere.

Verily, as my lady herself had remarked, it seemed that Providence was specially at work, ordering things in favour of the interests of herself and Captain Clanwaring!

CHAPTER V.

AN EVENTFUL EVENING.

New Year's Evening. The reception rooms at Arde Hall were in a blaze of light; not with stifling gas, as is too much the fashion in these modern years, but with wax candles, cool and pure. It was Mr. and Mrs. Arde's custom, to give a grand dinner the first day of the new year to as many guests as their dining-room would conveniently hold: and that was four-and-twenty. Four-and-twenty had been invited for to-day; but only two-and-twenty came: Sir Dene Clanwaring and his grandson Tom were absent.

Sir Dene sent an apology for himself: he had hoped to be well enough to come, but quite at the last moment found he was not. For Tom

little was said—he was altogether too insignificant to waste speech on. Lady Lydia spoke a few obscure words about going a journey; and Captain Clanwaring, stroking his handsome moustache, made a supercilious remark in May's ear as he was taking her in to dinner, to the effect that Sir Dene found Tom could no longer be tolerated. That was all. Tom's absence caused neither grief nor comment; nobody missed him or cared for it. Nobody, save one; and she might not show that she did. May heard Captain Clanwaring with a bright eye and smiling face, but her heart was sick with disappointment. The sunshine of the evening had gone out for *her*: too keenly she felt it, sitting through the long dinner.

The ladies rose to quit the dining-room; May went out last, following her mother. Captain Clanwaring whispered something to her as she passed—for it was he who bowed them out. May laughed in response: a sufficiently light laugh to listening ears. But her step grew slow and heavy as the door closed. They were all within the drawing-room before she was at its door.

"Miss May!"

Turning round at the whispered words, she saw Susan Cole. The woman had a folded slip of paper in her hand.

"Mr. Tom Clanwaring is outside, Miss May. There's something wrong, I'm afeared. He asked me if I could manage to give you this without anybody's seeing."

Opening the paper, she stood underneath the hall lamp while she read it. Susan Cole, her mission executed, vanished.

"I am going away, Mary; probably for years, possibly for ever. Will you come out to me for one minute? I am at the avenue gate.—T. C."

Her brain was confused; her heart was beating with its wild pain. Going away for ever! Showing herself for a minute or two in the drawing-room as a matter of precaution, May caught up a woollen shawl, and ran out at the hall door. The avenue gate was only across the lawn. It was a starlight night, cold and frosty, but she did not at once distinguish any one, for the shrubs grew thick there.

He had his back against the gate, but he stepped to meet her as she advanced. Involuntarily, in her deep agitation, she put out both her hands. He clasped and held them fondly to him, his agitation as great as her own.

In moments of agony—and these were nothing less—the mind is for the most part in a state of bewilderment. It was so with Mary Arde; it was so with him. But a confused impression was retained by her afterwards, as to what was said at the interview. Perhaps the fault lay chiefly with Tom Clanwaring, for in his angry excitement he was less clear than he might have been. Those who had been always against him, trying to get him sent out of Beechhurst Dene, had done their work at last, and ruined him with his grandfather, he said. He was being

sent away, Heaven knew where ; certainly with little prospect of ever being allowed to return. He had to depart for Bristol at once by the night-mail, and wait in that city for orders, on his way to Ireland.

She leaned against the gate for support : she would have pardoned him had he taken her to his arms and held her to his sheltering breast. But Tom Clanwaring, honourable as ever, dared not. Many and many a time had the warm words of love rashly trembled on his lips, and he had turned them off with some light jest : if he had put a restraint on himself then, how doubly needful was it that he should do so now ! Even his own poor quasi-position in the baronet's household was torn from him, and he was being sent into the world adrift, a real servant, to work for his living. The inconsistency of *his* attempting to think of Squire Arde's daughter, was more palpably present to him that night than it had ever previously been.

"I would have liked to wish Mr. and Mrs. Arde good bye, May ; but I cannot encounter the crowd they've got here to-night. So the will must go for the deed."

"But what is it that you have done?" she gasped. "*Why* are they sending you away?"

"I hardly know myself, May."

"Oh but you must know," she said, thinking it was an evasion, made to spare her pain. "What is it, Tom?"

"You will hear no end of charges against me, I doubt not," he said, and the vagueness of the reply, as if it were still an evasive one, did strike on her memory afterwards. "I don't know what they may say : and I don't think it is of much use asking you not to believe them. I was always the scapegoat, you know ; I shall be so to the end. May, I can no longer battle against the stream—and if I could, what end would it answer? It may be better for me that I should be away : but for leaving my dear old grandfather, I'd say there could not be a question of it. Think of me as kindly as you can, Mary."

The tears were streaming down her cheeks. "Only tell me, Tom, that you have done nothing very wrong," she whispered, her mind a chaos of confusion, of fear. Fear, she knew not of what : and perhaps his own want of clearness led to it. Mary Arde had never believed it possible that Sir Dene could turn against Tom to the length of discarding him—without some ample cause.

"If I have, they have goaded me to it," was his answer, spoken in the moment's reckless irritation, as he recalled the passion he had been in, the flooring he had given the captain : for he attached no meaning to May's words, or suspected that she could really believe ill of him. "God bless and be with you always, Mary ! I cannot stay longer ; neither ought I to keep you out here. But I could not leave the place for good without seeing you."

"Why—why do you say it is *for good*?"

"Be you very sure that they who have procured my banishment will take efficient care I don't return, May. That's why."

"Are we to part—like this?" she wailed, her voice in its anguish rising almost beyond her own controlling calmness.

"Mary, my darling, don't tempt me. Do you know what it is costing *me* to part like this?—to stand here and say quietly to you, I am going? Have you not known for some time past that if I had dared—There, I must not go on: another moment and the temptation to speak will be greater than I can resist. You understand well, I fancy, Mary. Circumstances cast a wide barrier between us, and I may not presume to think of ever passing it. If there were but the least prospect of my achieving any position in the world, I might say to you, I will hope, without forfeiting all honour; but there is none, and I do not."

She put out her trembling hands once more; she lifted her streaming eyes to his. To those wonderful blue ones in their deep caves, whose beauty the night could not wholly hide. The temptation was too great, and Tom Clanwaring bent his face on hers.

"It is but a cousin's kiss, Mary," he murmured: "we used to call ourselves cousins when we were children—taught so by Susan Cole. Surely none will grudge it us in parting. When I return—if I ever do—no doubt all danger will be over."

"Danger?" she breathed, questioningly.

"The danger that the scapegoat might forget himself and his honour by speaking of love. When you are the wife of a more lucky man than I, I may come back, May. Never before, unless my grandfather recalls me."

"You give me up, then?" she exclaimed in her pain: in the mortification that the renouncement undoubtedly brought to her.

"I do. I have no other resource. My parting blessing be upon you, Mary."

She drew her hands from his with a petulant gesture, and sped across the lawn, one bitter sob breaking from her lips: one more than bitter question from her heart—Did he care for her? When girls love as romantically as did Mary Arde, they are apt to fancy that all else should give place to it. Tom Clanwaring was Sir Dene's grandson—and May resentfully thought he might have been content to wait and see whether fortune would not be kind, before he renounced her. He knew *she* had money—so they should not have starved! A few minutes alone in her chamber, effacing the traces of the tell-tale tears, and then she was in the drawing-room, quite unnaturally gay, whirling through a mazy country dance with Captain Clanwaring.

There was one other person that Tom Clanwaring would not omit to say farewell to before he left the neighbourhood: and that was Mary Barber. In striding up to Harebell Farm, he met Cole the farrier at

the turning of the lane. It will be remembered that this was the son of the man spoken of as Cole the farrier in the first portion of this history. Young Cole and Tom had always been good friends.

"Good night, Mr. Tom," said the man as he was passing.

"Good night, and good-bye," replied Tom. "I am going away, Cole."

Cole wheeled round on his heel. "Ay, sir, so I gathered at the Dene this evening. But not just yet, are you?"

"In an hour's time. James drives me in the gig to catch the Bristol mail at Worcester. Good luck to you, Cole!"

"Stop a moment, sir—I beg your pardon. The servants said something about a quarrel with Captain Clanwaring: is that the reason you've got to go?"

"I suppose so."

"Nothing has happened *since* that to send you?" continued Cole, with an emphasis, as marked, on the one word.

"Nothing whatever. Fare you well, Cole. I've no time to lose."

As he went on up Harebell Lane, Cole stood and looked after him, as if in some hesitation. Finally he continued his way towards his home.

Mary Barber was alone in the kitchen when Tom went in; her mind intent upon a curious incident that had occurred to her earlier in the evening, her hands busy with some preparation of cooking for the morrow. To say that she was struck into herself with the news—that Tom was going into banishment in Ireland—would be saying little. Ireland, to the imagination of quiet country people, represented something like the opposite end of the world.

"It can't be!" she exclaimed, dropping the fork from her fingers, and leaving the eggs to beat up themselves.

"I'm going this very night, Mary. This very minute, I may almost say; for in a few minutes I must be off."

Mary Barber stood quite still. Like Miss Arde, she thought he must have done something ill to turn his grandfather against him to this extent. Banished to Ireland! The very extremity of the measure brought its own revulsion in her mind.

"It won't be for long, Mr. Tom. Sir Dene 'ud never keep you all out there. 'Twould be like transportation."

"I have got to go, Mary: whether it's for long or short."

"What on earth 'll be done wi' the land? Who'll look to it?"

"I don't know," he replied. "They'll get somebody, I suppose."

"Not they," dissented Mary Barber. "You'll be sent for back to 't, Mr. Tom. And a nice kettle o' fish I dare be bound you'll find things in! You away, and Sir Dene laid by—fine times it'll be for the men!"

Leaving her in this comforting belief without contradiction, Tom crossed the lane and went in home. The time of his departure was at

hand : James waited in the gig to drive him into Worcester to catch the Bristol night-mail, coming through the town on its way from Birmingham. He had been in hopes of seeing his grandfather once more.

"It's o' no good, Mr. Tom," said Gander sorrowfully. "Sir Dene he give orders he was not to be disturbed no more to-night on no account whatever ; and he locked his room when he went up to bed. Your portmanteau and other things is in the gig, sir."

"Then there's nothing more to keep me here. Turned out like a dog ! Good-bye, Gander," he added, shaking the man's hand heartily as he went out to the gig.

"I'll drive, James."

The groom handed him the reins and took the seat by his side. Gander watched the gig until the night hid it from his view. There came into the man's remembrance the turning out of his father, Geoffrey Clanwaring. A prevision lay upon Gander that Tom would never come back, to be forgiven as Geoffrey was.

The departure of Tom Clanwaring took the neighbourhood by surprise : and the more especially so because the precise cause of his banishment could not be ascertained. Sir Dene had issued a sharp general order to Lady Lydia and her family that nothing should be spoken of abroad—meaning in regard to ill-doing Miss Emma Geach. For once Lady Lydia was glad to obey him : her object was gained ; Tom was gone, and she could well concede the rest. Jarvis was silent from policy ; Otto from vexation : and Dene and Charles Clanwaring were away. So that scandal was buried ; never, Sir Dene hoped, to be unearthed again. But there was another sin, or rather a frightful suspicion of it, brought against Tom : on which it might be well, for the honour of the family, to be silent also.

By the time service was over on the following day, Sunday the second of January, the fact that Tom Clanwaring had been sent from Beechhurst Dene in disgrace, was pretty generally known abroad. Servants will talk : and the news had spread. Lady Lydia and her children talked, for that matter, telling the fact that he was gone. Certain hints and innuendoes were dropped by them (not by Otto) imparting a confirmed notion that Tom must have been guilty of some conduct too bad to be spoken of, and which for the sake of the name he bore had to be hushed up. How near they were to the truth—or, rather, to what was supposed to be the truth at Beechhurst Dene—few guessed.

But, of all, none felt more surprise than Squire Arde. In his secret heart he not only liked Tom Clanwaring, but thought well of him : and he could not imagine Tom could be guilty of any really bad conduct. In candour it must be added that the Squire had not the remotest suspicion of any attachment existing between Tom and

his daughter : in his pride he would have deemed it utterly impossible. May had not spoken of Tom's visit of the previous night.

Leaving his wife and daughter at their own home after service, the Squire went on with Lady Lydia to Beechhurst Dene. Sir Dene, only just up, and looking very ill, opened his heart at the sight of his friend of many years, who stood, as may be said, in the light of uncle to Tom the scapegoat. And, in point of fact, the relationship, if it may be called so, of the Squire Arde to Tom, had always stood rather as a barrier in my lady's plans against him. During the walk home she had talked in the most motherly way of Tom, lamenting his deplorable sins after the manner of a pitying angel. Not even out of her did Mr. Arde get at the nature of the sins ; but she did drop a hint that he had shamefully wronged his grandfather in some money transaction in the hour of his departure. Mr. Arde asked the baronet point-blank what this wrong was.

"Why did Lydia speak of it?" rejoined Sir Dene, a shade of bitter mortification rising in his pale sad face. "Ungrateful as he has proved himself, unworthy the name of Clanwaring, I'd not have it talked of abroad for the world. All this past night, in spite of his conduct in the other bad affair, I've been saying to myself that it surely cannot have been he. To steal money is not the work of a Clanwaring."

"What other affair?" questioned Mr. Arde, noting the words.

"Never mind—nothing," returned Sir Dene sharply. "That at least may be sunk in oblivion from henceforth. He has got his dismissal for it, so let it be."

And on this point Mr. Arde found it was useless to question further. So that he was no wiser than before as to the true cause that had led to Tom's disgrace. They told him of the other : as Lady Lydia had hinted at it, Sir Dene thought it might be as well to disclose the whole. The baronet just mentioned the heads, hating every word that fell from his lips, and my lady supplied the details.

The facts were these. After the explosion had taken place the previous afternoon, and Tom had been made to understand he must quit the place that night, Sir Dene, terribly upset by the disturbance, shut himself into the bay-parlour. The agitation had made him too ill to think of keeping his dinner engagement at the Hall, and he charged those who were going to say so. My lady and Mrs. Letsom went up betimes to attire themselves for the visit : Captain Clanwaring, reviving from the effects of his overthrow and Tom's blow, was engaged with a visitor. One of the two gentlemen who had dined there on Christmas Day had again driven over from Worcester. It was Major Fife. He declined to come indoors, saying he had not time, but asked the captain to walk about a bit with him out of doors. So they made their way round to that side of the house where the trees and shrubs were thick.

While Sir Dene was thus sitting alone in the dusk, almost dark, Gander presented himself, saying that Mr. Parker had called to pay his rent. Rather glad to receive it—for the rent, half a year's, had been due since Michaelmas—Sir Dene bid Gander show him in. Mr. Parker entered, making many apologies for not having been able to bring the money before. Sir Dene, always considerate to his tenants, especially the small ones, heard him with good-nature, and filled in a receipt—some of which he kept ready written in that upright piece of furniture, the *secrétaire*—by firelight. The money, forty-five pounds, was handed to Sir Dene in a canvas bag generally used for samples of barley, the farmer observing that twenty pounds of it was in gold, and the rest in notes on the Worcester old bank, and that Sir Dene would find the amount correct. Sir Dene nodded; he had no doubt of that; and put the bag on the table, unopened. Mr. Parker, declining refreshment, left, being in a hurry, saying he would call for his bag in a day or two and drink a glass of ale then. After his departure, Sir Dene sat a few minutes in thought; and then with a deep sigh, stood up, undid the bag, and counted the money. He was putting it back in the bag and tying the tape round the neck when Tom Clanwaring came in. The sight of him disturbed Sir Dene afresh. Hastily thrusting the bag into the *secrétaire*, the lid of which had stood open, he was about to lock it, when, either from agitation or by accident, he dropped the key. Tom stepped forward and picked it up, to save his grandfather stooping. Sir Dene locked the *secrétaire*, but did not take the key out: for Tom had begun to speak and he turned quickly to confront him in his anger, pointing imperiously to the door.

"Quit my presence, sir."

Not on the instant did Tom obey. He had come in to speak his contrition for the heat he had displayed an hour before, the passion given vent to in the presence of him, his grandfather. Not a syllable would Sir Dene hear: and by way of summarily cutting short the discussion, he went out of the room, leaving Tom in it. Gander, standing at his pantry door, accosted his master as he was passing on to the dining-room, to say that Cole the farrier was craving a minute's speech of Sir Dene.

"I can't see him; I can't attend to anything just now," interrupted Sir Dene. "Let him come later."

Gander had no need to repeat this to Cole, for the man was standing behind him and heard it. Cole had been regaled in the servants' hall with the account of the explosion, and that Mr. Tom was turned out. Saying he would call again towards night, he took his departure.

After pacing the dining-room for three or four minutes in much perturbation, Sir Dene returned to the bay-parlour. It was empty then—as he expected—the door was shut and all things were apparently un-

disturbed. Remembering that he had left the key in the lock of the secrétaire, Sir Dene took it out before he sat down.

Rather a remarkable circumstance it was, taken in conjunction with another remarkable circumstance to be told of immediately, that Sir Dene did not again quit the bay-parlour, but remained in it for the evening. He took nothing but a basin of soup for his dinner; and, that, he caused Gander to bring to him: the family, you remember, going to dine at the Hall. Between seven and eight o'clock he sent Gander to summon to his presence Tom Clanwaring, who was then upstairs packing his things. This was to be the last interview. Very coldly and distantly did Sir Dene speak to Tom, gave him a few concise instructions as to how he was to proceed to take the mail that night as it passed through Worcester on its way to Bristol; and thence travel to the latter place, where he would wait at an inn for instructions from Ireland. Taking out his pocket-book, he handed him a sum of money in notes for his journey, and something over, shook hands with him by way of farewell, and dismissed him, wishing him, as a parting injunction, better behaviour in another place than he had latterly displayed at Beechhurst Dene. Tom would have lingered. He earnestly desired to say a word in his own defence—though, be it always understood, he was entirely ignorant of any particularly grave offence being attributed to him—to plead his cause and ask *why* his grandfather was taking this extreme measure of discarding him. But Sir Dene stopped him at the onset: he refused to hear a word, and told him that he would not. And this was their final leave-taking. Tom completed his packing, and then went off to seek the interview with May Arde. Sir Dene sat on, alone.

Between eight and nine, Cole came again, and was admitted. His business was to get the prescription for some famous new horse medicine: of which Sir Dene had spoken to him a week before, and promised him the loan of. Sir Dene went at once to the secrétaire to get the paper, telling Cole to hold the light. The first thing that struck Sir Dene on pulling down the lid, was that the bag of money was gone. In his astonishment he spoke words which disclosed enough to Cole—the circumstances of the loss and the amount of money in the bag. Even as Sir Dene spoke, the thought flashed over him that it could only have been taken by Tom—that no one else had had access to the room: and in his horror and fear lest such a disgrace on the name of Clanwaring should be published, he first of all enjoined the man to silence, and then strove to smooth the matter by saying it was possible the bag was not lost, but had been removed to the safer quarters of his own chamber upstairs. Cole took his cue, and affected to believe that his Honour would there find it. The horse doctor was a keen man; and some muttered words of Sir Dene's, "What! has he done this in addition to the rest!" almost made him doubt whether suspicion might

not be turning on Tom. However, it was not a business that he could presume to intermeddle with. Thanking the baronet for the prescription, Cole said good night with the most unconscious look in the world.

Then Sir Dene called Gander in, and bade him shut the door. "When I went out of this parlour to the dining-room earlier in the evening—do you mind it, Gander?" began he. "It was when you told me Cole had come up, and I said I could not see him. D'ye mind it, I ask?"

"Yes, Sir Dene."

"I left Mr. Tom in this parlour. How long did he stay in it? Did you notice him when he came out?"

"He didn't come out this way at all, Sir Dene. He must have left it by the window here."

"How d'ye know?"

"Well, sir, he was not in here when you came back again—I followed you in directly, if you remember, with the candles. And I'm sure he had not come out at the door while you were away, Sir Dene. If he had I must ha' seen him. Mr. Tom oftener goes out by this here glass door window nor any other way, when he's a-wanting to go straight out o' doors."

Sir Dene paused. "Who came into the room besides, while I was away from it?"

"Not a soul," replied Gander.

And that exactly accorded with Sir Dene's own impression. As he had not shut the door of the dining-room, he thought he must have seen them if they did. Nevertheless, he *hoped* it was the contrary, and spoke accordingly in his mind's exasperation.

"Somebody did, I know."

"Somebody didn't, Sir Dene," returned Gander, with the familiarity of an old servant. "They couldn't. I never was beyond sight o' the door."

It was true. Gander's pantry and Sir Dene's door were within view of each other on opposite sides of the passage. It was simply impossible that any one could have entered the bay parlour during the short interval in question unseen by Gander.

"Did you see Mr. Tom when he came into it?" resumed Sir Dene—as if willing to put the extent of Gander's sight to the test.

"I watched him in, sir. 'Twere just after Farmer Parker left. As Mr. Tom came down the passage, he asked me whether Sir Dene was in the bay parlour; I said yes, and he went in. I could hear him and you talk together for half a minute, Sir Dene, and then you come out on't. Mr. Tom he didn't come out at all: he must ha' went through the glass doors."

And with this conclusive evidence, what was Sir Dene Clanwaring to

think but that Tom was the culprit. It was as clear as though they had seen him do it, reiterated the Lady Lydia.

Such was the story told to Mr. Arde. In the impulse of the moment he took up the belief as warmly as they did, assuming Tom could not be innocent, except by a miracle; that he had been driven into crime at last. And though he regarded it with nearly as much horror as Sir Dene—for was not Tom connected with him?—he yet felt a large amount of pity. "Turned out nearly penniless, I suppose; and so the temptation was too great," thought the Squire to himself, as he went out of the presence of Sir Dene. But this feeling of pity Lady Lydia unconsciously crushed.

"And yet, I can hardly think he'd do it!" burst forth Mr. Arde, a revulsion of opinion setting in as he stood outside the front door, talking with her.

My lady glanced round, making sure they were quite alone, and sank her voice to a whisper.

"You'd not say so if you knew all. The other thing he has been guilty of is worse than that."

"*Worse than that!*"

"At least—if not worse, it's something very bad indeed of another nature. People estimate offences with different eyes, you know, Mr. Arde. I think theft might only have been expected from a man given to low tastes and low associates as is Tom Clanwaring."

"But what is the other thing that he has done?" resumed the Squire. "Can't you tell it me?"

"I cannot tell you, dear Mr. Arde. The probability is that you will hear of it before long—for I should think the neighbourhood is sure to get hold of it; but Sir Dene has forbidden it to be spoken of by any of us. My good son Jarvis, too, has begged me to be silent for the young man's sake. Ill as Tom Clanwaring has behaved, Jarvis is yet considerate for him."

Away went the Squire, the words burning a hole in his curiosity, and puzzling him mightily. For he was no wiser than ever, you see, as to what had driven Tom from Beechhurst Dene. "He must have turned out an awful scamp of some sort," was his mental thought.

"Well?—what have you learnt?—what has led to his abrupt dismissal?" eagerly questioned Mrs. Arde, as her husband entered. Most excessively curious on her own score, she had been waiting with impatience the result of his visit to the Dene. Mary, standing by, held her breath as she listened for the answer.

"I can't come to the bottom of it," said Mr. Arde; "neither Sir Dene nor my lady seems inclined to speak out. There has been a series of general misconduct, I fancy; petty ill-doings one after another; Lady Lydia says no one can imagine what they have had to put up with from him, and how forbearing they have been. But," and Mr.

Arde's tones fell to something like fear—"whatever his petty offences might have been, he need not have capped them with a crime."

May's trembling lips parted. "A crime!" echoed Mrs. Arde.

"He went off with a bag of money belonging to Sir Dene. Stole it from the secretary."

"No!" passionately cried May. "That he never did."

Mr. Arde turned his eyes upon her in surprise.

"What are you frightened at, child? It does not affect you. I called out No, just as you have done, until I heard the facts."

"And was this what he was dismissed for?" inquired Mrs. Arde.

"No, no; did you not understand me? This occurred after his dismissal—as he was going away. I tell you I can't get at the truth of what he was sent away for," continued Mr. Arde: "Lady Lydia says it is too bad to be spoken of. I don't think they'd have told me about the theft of the money either, but for a word my lady let drop; and so I asked Sir Dene point-blank. But, mark you; though it has been disclosed to me, this theft—I am connected with the fellow, unfortunately, and that makes a difference—not a syllable of it must be breathed abroad. Lady Lydia, incensed though she has cause to be against Tom, begged me to bury it in silence, for his own sake. As if I should proclaim it! The disgrace would reflect itself on me almost as much as on the Clanwarings."

Miss May metaphorically tossed her head, incipiently rebellious. "It's all of a piece," ran her mental thoughts. "A 'long series of petty ill-doings,' finishing off with something too bad to be spoken of, and a bag of money! Oh the wicked slanderers! They may just as well go and say that I had done it."

But that was destined to be an eventful night in more ways than one, and there's something else to be told of it. Somewhere about the hour that the money must have disappeared—that is, during the short interval Sir Dene was absent from the bay parlour—a little earlier or a little later as might have been, Mary Barber went over on an errand to Beechhurst Dene. Neighbours in rural districts borrow household trifles indiscriminately of one another: when no shops are within convenient reach, this is almost a matter of necessity. Harebell Farm happened to be out of a very insignificant commodity—lemons. Mr. Tillett, coming home in the course of the afternoon from attending the corn-market at Worcester, the first market of the New Year, told Mary Barber that he had invited some friends to spend the following day at the farm, and particularly desired that a lemon pudding should be made. Vexed at her own forgetfulness, she made no demur, thinking she could borrow the lemons from Beechhurst Dene. Sometimes the Dene borrowed things of her. So at dusk, Mary Barber, putting on a shawl and bonnet, went across the lane on her errand. She had just entered the gate when a man came dashing down the path right upon her, and laid hold

of her, as if for protection from some pursuing evil. Very considerably astonished was Mary Barber: and not the less so when she recognized the intruder through the dusk to be Randy Black. Randy in mortal fear. The man was completely unhinged: his face white, his hands shaking, his breath coming in gasps. In the moment's abandonment he confessed the cause of this—which he most assuredly would not have done at a calmer time. He had just seen Robert Owen.

The assertion startled Mary Barber into nearly as much terror as his own. It was so long, too, now since anything of the kind had been talked of. Black, it appeared—at least this was his own account—was going to the Dene to try and get speech with Captain Clanwaring. He was about half-way down the path to the house when some man (as he at first took it to be) glided out from between the trees and stood facing him. The next moment, Black saw that it was Robert Owen. Black turned tail and took flight in awful terror; and so met Mary Barber. Mary Barber, listening to this, looking at the gloomy path before her, the dark winter trees around her, decided to let the lemons be just then, and send somebody else for them by-and-by.

They passed out at the gate together, Black sticking very close to her. She went back to her own gate; he went too: it actually seemed as if the man dared not just then be without some companionship. He was getting better of his illness, but was very ailing still, and Mr. Priar had ordered him not to go out. Which order Black paid no manner of attention to. The carter's boy at Harebell Farm, leaving work for the night, came through the Farm gate in his smock-frock, whistling.

"If ye'll go up along o' me to the inn, and bring down a physic bottle as I wants took to Dr. Priar's, I'll give ye a sixpence, Ned Pound," said Black. And Mary Barber could not help noticing how the man's voice shook still.

"I'll go, and thank ye," replied Ned Pound after a pause of doubt, as to whether so astoundingly munificent an offer could be real—for the boy had never had a sixpence of his own in his whole life. "I say, what makes your teeth rattle so?"

"It's this confounded cold night," replied Black: "enough to freeze one's bones it is. Come along."

Mary Barber looked after them as they went up the lane, Black's hand on the lad's shoulder. The extreme terror, displayed by such a hardened man as Black, struck her, and always had struck her, as being marvellously strange.

"He didn't dare go on by hisself," thought she: "that physic bottle's nought but a lame excuse. A whole sixpence to give!—Ned Pound'll be rich. And now—what should ha' brought back the poor master again? I'd thought he was laid."

What indeed? But, in this one instance, Black's sight and fears misled him. The figure he had taken for an apparition was no other than

one of flesh and blood—Major Fife's. It will be remembered that Sir Dene Clanwaring and Gander both noticed the striking resemblance that Major Fife bore to the late Robert Owen.

It happened that Major Fife had come over from Worcester that afternoon to press his claims again on Jarvis Clanwaring. Totally declining to be put off any longer with vague promises, which Jarvis could alone give, the major, not caring in his own interests to proceed to extremities, discussed the face of things as they walked about together amidst the winter trees, both of them smoking. To appeal to Sir Dene—as Major Fife half threatened to do, there and then—would not serve the cause, Jarvis assured him, but the contrary; most probably destroy all hope from that quarter for the future. Jarvis offered to give him a legal undertaking to repay a portion of the money, if not all, by that day fortnight, the 15th of January. It was the best he could do. You can't get blood from a stone. Captain Clanwaring was tolerably candid about the state of his affairs; and the major, clearly seeing that there was no chance of making better terms, was fain to accept these. While Jarvis went in to write the document, the major, preferring still to remain where he was and finish his tobacco, strolled in and out amongst the trees and down the path: and thus ensued the encounter with Black. The man's extraordinary conduct, evidently the result of terror, astonished Major Fife not a little. He mentioned it to Captain Clanwaring on his return with the paper. The captain fancied by the description given that the intruder must have been Randy Black. But his behaviour he could not account for. Neither then nor later did it come to Jarvis Clanwaring's knowledge that Major Fife bore a resemblance to the deceased man of whom he had often heard—Robert Owen, of Harebell Farm. Major Fife at once departed in the gig; which James the groom had been taking charge of at the front entrance.

And as Ned Pound was coming down Harebell Lane with the physic bottle and the promised sixpence, he met Captain Clanwaring striding up to the Trailing Indian.

CHAPTER VI.

AT SIR DENE'S SECRETAIRE.

In a day or two there arrived two letters from Tom Clanwaring, dated Bristol. Very good and proper and nice letters, both of them. The one, written to Mr. Arde, expressed his regret that he had been obliged to leave without saying farewell to himself and Mrs. Arde, but that he had not liked to intrude upon them when they were engaged with their dinner-guests. It alluded to his abrupt dismissal, stated that he knew not the cause of it, and was unconscious of any offence of his that

could have led to it, unless it was the quarrel with Captain Clanwaring in the afternoon, when he confessed that he had allowed himself to fall into undue passion. Not a word did it breathe of any sense of injustice, or cast the slightest reflection upon man, woman, or child: the sweetness of Tom Clanwaring's nature was never more unconsciously displayed than in that farewell letter. Squire Arde read it over once, and then began it again.

The other letter was to Sir Dene. Tom earnestly begged his grandfather to believe that he had not consciously been guilty of any offence towards him, or been willingly ungrateful. Nothing, he said, could be further from his thoughts. His greatest prayer and hope now was that Sir Dene should sometime be convinced of this; would see how much he had always loved him, how he had done his best to serve him, and how bitterly he was feeling the separation. Tom added some directions in the last page as to certain matters connected with the business of the estate, so that trouble might be saved to those who should succeed him in its management. It was a long letter, every word of it breathing the sentiments of a kindly and honest gentleman, and of the affection he felt for his home and his grandfather.

Too kindly, too honest to be allowed to fall under the eye of Sir Dene. Lady Lydia—who had taken the precaution to break the seal and skim the contents—might put no belief in the good faith of the letter; but she was by no means sure it might not act so far on the old man's tender feelings as to induce him to recal Tom. So she dropped it into the fire and held her tongue about its arrival. The opening of other people's letters was a grave offence in those days, not only against the code of honour: but who observed any kind of code to the humble dependent, Tom Clanwaring?

And Sir Dene never knew that he had written.

Now Squire Arde possessed a conscience. Before that letter arrived, he had begun rather to veer round to Tom again and doubt whether he had really been guilty of any grave offence; the letter only served to increase the feeling and the doubt. He could not always forget that poor Tom, so hardly used among them, was the nephew of his dead wife; and he suddenly determined to go to Bristol and see him. It was understood that Tom was waiting at Bristol, according to instructions received from Ireland, until some agricultural implements should be ready, that he was to take over with him. Saying nothing to anybody, except his wife—and to her only that business called him away for a day or two—Squire Arde sent his servant to Worcester to engage a place in the Bristol mail, and departed himself the same night for the latter city, as Tom had previously done.

He saw Tom. He listened to his version of matters (given in answer to authoritative questioning), of what his treatment had been at Beechhurst Dene, especially in the past week; and Mr. Arde came to

the conclusion that Tom had been more sinned against than sinning. But when he came to speak of some grave offence or crime, such as Lady Lydia had hinted at, but would not explain, Tom declared she must have been mistaken, for he had committed none. Mr. Arde, thinking it impossible she could have been so far mistaken, pressed the point; but Tom adhered to what he said.

"It does not matter," he lightly observed in his good-natured way. "I don't claim to be better than other people, sir." He had never called Mr. Arde "uncle;" had not been taught to do so. It might have been different had his own aunt, Mr. Arde's first wife, lived. The last thing Mr. Arde spoke of was the money.

"By the way," began he in a careless tone, "there has been a loss at the Dene since you left: or, rather, the evening you were leaving. A bag of money—forty-five pounds I am told it contained—that Sir Dene put into his secretary, disappeared in a mysterious manner."

"Was it the bag I saw him put in?" cried Tom, raising his honest eyes fearlessly to the Squire's face. "What a strange thing! It can't be lost."

"Yes, I believe it was that same bag. Sir Dene said something about your having been present when he put it up. It seems he left the key in the lock, and was absent from the room three or four minutes; not more. During that time the bag disappeared."

"Who went into the room?"

"There it is. No one went in, save Sir Dene and Gander. They did not see you come out, either."

"I? Oh, I went out by the glass doors. The truth is, I was so grieved at Sir Dene's refusing to hear a word of what I wanted to say, that as he went out one way, I turned out the other to walk my vexation off."

"Well, they both declare that no one whatever went into the room. Sir Dene— What now?"

A sudden light, as of awakened remembrance, shone in Tom Clanwaring's eyes. "Halloa!" he exclaimed, "I saw——" And there he stopped short.

"Saw what?" asked Mr. Arde.

"No," said Tom, "I'll say no more. The fact is, I thought I remembered to have seen somebody go into the room: but perhaps—perhaps I was mistaken. I daresay I was mistaken."

"Go in by which door?"

"No, sir; I'll say no more."

"You ought to say. The money was stolen."

"I never will, sir. I'd not say it if I were certain. No, not though I had seen it taken: which I certainly did not. Let people fight their own battles."

"And suppose they were to suspect *you* of taking it?"

Tom burst into a laugh. "Suspect me of taking money! Not they. They know me better than that, all of them."

"Suppose they were to *accuse* you of it?"

"Accuse me to whom, sir? Not to Sir Dene: it would be waste of trouble. He knows that his money would be as safe with me as it is with him. I am his grandson, Mr. Arde."

Mr. Arde looked at the open countenance, at the blue eyes, so full of earnest truth, and he mentally saw that whoever else had stolen the money, Tom had not.

"Were it told to you that you had been accused of this thing, you would surely speak, Tom Clanwaring!"

"I don't think I should," was Tom's answer. "I'd rather do a man a good turn than a bad one, be he friend or enemy. That is the only safe way to get on pleasantly in this life. It all comes home to us, sir. If we sow flowers, we are repaid by the perfume; if we plant nettles, they must spring up and sting us. I don't believe a man ever did the smallest kindness, but it was in some way returned to him; I feel sure that for every injury a man or woman designedly inflicts on others, a worse evil is returned. Mrs. Owen taught me these truths when I was a little child, and I have seen them exemplified scores of times since."

But, though Mr. Arde felt at rest on the score of Tom's misconduct, he could not effect his return to the Dene. The edict of banishment was gone forth, and it might not be revoked. Neither did Mr. Arde see any urgent reason why it should be. He considered that some experience of the world might be of benefit to Tom rather than the contrary: and instead of telling Tom he would help him to return, he urged him not to "kick" against the new place in Ireland, but to do his best and make himself useful in it. Things might brighten, he observed; they generally did by dint of a little patience and perseverance. Tom replied that he had no intention of kicking against it: he was turned adrift, and it appeared Hobson's choice—go there, or starve.

"No need to starve," retorted the Squire; "you've got health and strength to work, and a good share of brains. There's not a man in England, or Ireland either, knows land better than you do, Tom. And look here: I've brought a bit of money for you."

It was a hundred pounds that he took from his pocket—to Tom's intense astonishment. The Squire explained. He had been putting it by for him bit by bit ever since Tom was a child. Foreseeing perhaps that Beechhurst Dene might not be a home for him always, that the time might come when he would be thrown upon his own resources, Mr. Arde, recognizing that Tom had some kind of claim upon him, put by this money by degrees for the rainy day. Had he found Tom to be worthless he would have kept it in his pocket: hence his journey of inquiry to Bristol.

"Put it safely up, Tom, and take care of it. Don't use it unless you

really require it. Should you never get your recal to Beechhurst Dene, it may be useful to you."

Tom thanked him with all his heart; his earnest eyes, his expressive face, betraying his gratitude better than words could do it. Throughout his life he had been singularly responsive to kindness: probably from the little of it that was shown him.

On the morning following this, after Mr. Arde had quitted Bristol, Tom received a letter from Cole the farrier. Saying that he had not been able to get his address before, and now only surreptitiously through Gander's good-nature, he wrote to tell Tom that he had seen some one (whom he mentioned), standing at the open secrétaire that evening, just at the time the money must have been taken: and that person was no doubt the thief. The reason of Cole's writing this was, that a hint had reached him, throwing some suspicion on Tom Clanwaring—though, in his delicacy he did not expressly say so. Tom immediately sent the following letter back to Cole:—

"Thank you for writing to me, my good fellow: your motive was a right one, and I think I discern the prompting cause. But say no more to any one. *You may be mistaken.* Keep silence. Even if you had *proof* as to who it was took the money—which you have not—there may be private reasons why it should not be told abroad. As to me—for, what I conclude is, that you have heard my name brought in—my back is broad enough to bear anything put upon it by idle report: and you must know, and I know, that no one whom I care for, or who cares for me, would suspect me of such a thing. Sir Dene knows me better, and so do others. *Be silent.* I rely upon you to be so. Let people fight out their own battles: it is no affair of yours; I do not intend to make it mine. Good luck to you, Cole, in all ways.

"Sincerely yours, T. C."

Tom Clanwaring was right. Not for long did any one who knew him continue the suspicion as to the money. A complete revulsion of feeling set in with Sir Dene: and he called himself names for having allowed his mind to entertain such a suspicion for a moment. Even Lady Lydia, upon sober reflection, grew to think that it could not have been Tom—for nothing in his past life had led her to suppose he would descend to be a thief. Make the worst of him, and of the sins she had been fond of attributing to him, he would scarcely sink so low as that. No. Had there been nothing else against Tom, he might have been recalled instantan. But there was. Not to speak of those general petty sins, there was that other grave charge, not easily refuted. It was *that* that troubled Sir Dene: he had always believed Tom to be as morally good a man as his father Geoffry was: and the discovery to Sir Dene was bitter. No chance of that being refuted yet awhile: if it ever was, or could be.

It must be remarked that Lady Lydia did at first believe Tom had taken the money. In the teeth of the one great assumed fact—that only he had been in the room—she could not well think otherwise. The possibility that any one else had stolen in through the glass doors,

did not then occur to her or to Sir Dene. But it was the theory taken up now: though whether she would have arrived at it of her own accord is uncertain.

On the Tuesday, the day following Mr. Arde's departure for Bristol, Mrs. Arde and Mary Barber met accidentally in Dene Hollow, the latter with a big market-basket in her hand. The two invariably held a gossip together when they met: and on this occasion Mrs. Arde (who considered Tom Clanwaring belonged to Mary Barber at least as much as to anybody else) chose to ignore her husband's injunction to secrecy, and whispered to her in confidence the story of Tom's misdoings: that is, of the one crowning act of them. Mary Barber's hard face took a harder hue in her astonishment; her grey eyes fixed themselves with a stare on Mrs. Arde's.

"Steal a bag o' money! *You* don't believe it of him!" she continued fiercely and abruptly.

"But I can't help believing it, impossible though it seems that he could do such a thing," returned Mrs. Arde. "There was no one else near the room, you see."

"He went out at the glass doors, did he?" quietly observed Mary Barber.

"They say so."

"Which proves he must have left 'em undone, for they don't fasten from the outside," reasoned Mary Barber. "What was to prevent somebody else from going in and helping theirselves to the money?"

Mrs. Arde paused: the notion had not struck her. They were not altogether conjurors in those parts: besides, the accusation of Tom, assumed to be a certainty, had kept suspicion from being directed to other quarters.

"I fancy there could not have been time for any one else to get in," said Mrs. Arde, revolving matters.

"A thing like that's soon done—you must know it is, ma'am. Thieves be deft o' fingers."

"Of course it might be so," spoke the lady slowly. "But—was any ill-character likely to be close up at the house at that hour?"

"There's tramps and ill-folk about always at dusk, a-watching what they can put their hands on," said Mary Barber. "A couple o' gipsies, big strong men too, was at our house o' Saturday, a-wanting to sell iron skewers. One on 'em might get up to the Dene from Harebell Lane quite easy. And if none o' the servants was on the look out, why he——"

The woman stopped. Stopped as if a shot had taken her. There had flashed into her memory one whom she saw flying from the house at dusk on Saturday; flying in terror. Not a tramp; but a man who would put his hand to worse deeds, if report might be trusted, than any tramp in the three kingdoms.

"What time was it exactly that this here theft happened? Do ye know, ma'am?" she presently resumed.

"I don't know exactly. Some time between four and five. Nearer five, I should think, for it was quite dusk. Why do you ask?"

"Well I—I was a-wondering," returned Mary Barber evasively, saying no more in her prudent caution. She wanted time to reflect first.

"Any way, Mrs. Arde, don't you go on a-suspecting Mr. Tom Clanwaring," were her parting words, spoken emphatically. "He'd no more touch what's not his own, than you or me would. He's a gentleman to his fingers' ends; ay, and a right noble one. Warn't their sending of him off to that Irish Botany Bay enough for 'em, but they must bring up this?"

Mrs. Arde continued her way. Mary Barber put her back against the railings to think. It happened to be in that part of the Hollow where her poor mother's cottage had stood: her feet were pressing what might once have been the kitchen floor, on which she had played in infancy. The cottage was gone, and her mother was gone, so long ago now that its very remembrance was growing dim: and she and Sir Dene Clanwaring were drawing nearer and nearer to that other world, to which so many connected with this history, and younger than they were, had passed on before them.

Not that any of these thoughts were in Mary Barber's mind then: it was otherwise occupied. What she wanted to recal was, the precise time at which she had gone over to the Dene on Saturday night. And, try as she would, she could not. All she was sure of was that it was dusk; not dark: but she had not taken note of the time. The cuckoo clock (that had passed with the other things into Mr. Tillett's possession from William Owen) was getting old like herself, out of order often. On Saturday it had stood still all day.

The more she reflected on it, the stronger grew her conviction that the criminal was Black. Black, and nobody else. One thought led to another. She began to doubt whether Black's state of terror had not arisen from a fear that he was being pursued; that his assertion of having seen the apparition of Robert Owen, was all an invention to account for the fear. And this was the more likely from the fact that some years had elapsed since any report of the ghost had been raised: Mary Barber had been living in the agreeable assurance that time had "laid" it. Turning back, for she had been on her way to Hurst Leet, she went straight in at the front gates of Beechurst Dene.

"It's right that they should know I saw Black where I did," ran her thoughts, "and specially if any on 'em be a really accusing Mr. Tom. Not as I believe *that*. Black, he's a nasty one to make a enemy of: so I'll just say I see him and no more. Let Sir Dene and them do what they like in it."

Considerably astonished was Jones the footman, when he flung open the door of the grand entrance, to find nobody at it but Mary Barber. The woman knew proper manners as well as Jones did, perhaps better, and apologized for not going round to the side, on the score of her time being "precious" that morning. But she did not get to see Sir Dene: he was very poorly Jones said, and not up yet: would Lady Lydia do? Mary Barber considered, and then saying that my lady would do, put her basket down. But she would rather have seen Sir Dene. So she was shown into the library to my lady's presence, and to that of her two sons, who happened to be with her. My lady's curiosity was a little raised, as to what the woman could want—she had heard her come to the grand entrance. She sat near the window, working at some silk patchwork for bed furniture: Jarvis and Otto were talking together by the mantelpiece.

Standing, for she was not asked to sit, Mary Barber told what she had come to tell. Barely had she finished when Otto Clanwaring brought down his hand on the table with emphasis, as he turned to his mother and brother.

"That's it. There's the clue. I told you from the first what a shameful wrong on Tom it was, to suspect *him*. And you accuse Randy Black!" he added, approaching Mary Barber.

"Sir, I accuse nobody. Randy Black's one that I'd not like to accuse myself—he might be for drowning me in return—as perhaps he drowned somebody else, years ago. I only tell you where I see him o' Saturday evening—a-coming out o' the back grounds here in a pucker o' fear. He give me a plausible cause for his fright—which has nothing to do with it, and don't matter: it mightn't ha' been true. I couldn't keep this back on my conscience, hearing that you suspected Mr. Tom Clanwaring."

"I never did," spoke Otto. "It was too ridiculously absurd to those who knew him."

"Both to them as knew him and to them as didn't," amended Mary Barber. But at this moment Captain Clanwaring stepped forward, pushing aside his brother.

"We are much obliged to you of course, Mrs. Barber, for this information," said he in his pleasantest tones—and the captain's could be soft and pleasant when he chose to make them so. "It is very good of you to come. But now—will you add to the obligation by keeping this doubt of Randy Black to yourself, at least until it shall have been inquired into? The fact is," he added, meeting the woman's questioning eyes, and speaking slowly, as if with unwilling reluctance, "that my suspicions have been directed to a different quarter."

"Do you mean to Mr. Tom?" independently demanded Mary Barber.

"Oh dear no. We are sure it was not he." And as the positive

words fell from Jarvis's lips, Otto, put into the background, looked hard at his brother.

"Well, Captain Clanwaring, as to keeping my doubts of Black to myself, I'll readily promise you that, for it's just what I mean to do," answered Mary Barber. "I don't say the man was guilty: he might not ha' been anigh Sir Dene's window: I must leave you to be the judge o' that. Seeing him where I did, a rushing pell-mell down the path, in a mortal fright, it was my duty to let you know on't. That's all."

"But—how did he account for this state of fear himself?" interrupted Otto. "Surely you may tell, Mrs. Barber."

"Well, Mr. Otto, what he told me was, that he had seen something to frighten him amid the trees," she rejoined after a slight pause. "As I say, it might ha' been just an invention of his own. Good day to you, my lady; good day to you, sirs."

Lady Lydia nodded in reply to the salutation: she had not spoken one word throughout the interview. Otto civilly went to the front door with Mary Barber, and she made him a curtsy as she took up her basket and departed. Short though the interval was before Otto returned to the library, he found his mother and Jarvis talking fast, almost disputing. On my lady's mind there rested not a doubt that the offender was Black: her son would not admit it.

"This must be kept from everybody, Otto," spoke Jarvis, wheeling round on his brother. "From Sir Dene especially."

"And why?" asked Otto honestly. "I should take it to Sir Dene at once, and clear Tom."

"Tom shall be cleared with him so far, never fear. In fact, Sir Dene's own mind has cleared him already. Look here, Otto: I must beg of you not to interfere in this. It is essential to me—I have been telling Lady Lydia so—not to exasperate Black just now. The fact is," added Jarvis, mentally anathematizing his brother's straightforward turn of mind that obliged the explanation, "I owe Black money, and can't pay him; and I believe he'd do me an ill turn were the opportunity afforded him. If we accuse him of this, it would bring on an inconvenient climax for me, for he'd be safe to come off to Sir Dene with the debt. I wish the devil had all money!"

"What do you owe money for to Black?" asked Otto in some slight wonder.

"Tobacco," shortly answered Jarvis. "A tough score. Been accumulating for ages."

Otto knitted his brow. In his heart of hearts he despised his spend-thrift elder brother. It might be detected in his voice as he spoke.

"It is no just cause for the information, that this woman has given us, being withheld from Sir Dene."

"That's only cause the first, and personal to myself," resumed Jarvis. "There is another reason, and a weightier one. I don't believe Black

had anything to do with taking the bag. I suspect some one else—you heard me say so to the woman—and I want to follow up the suspicion privately. Accuse Black wrongfully, and he is sure to make a row over it, and my efforts will be defeated.”

“But who is it that you suspect, Jarvis?” cried Lady Lydia impatiently. And the barrister’s eyes were asking the same question.

“Just at present I cannot tell you, from the same motive. Be content to leave it with me for a little while, mother—and I’ll do my best to unravel it. It is a man you would never think of—nor Otto either. Of course I may be mistaken; but I’ve got just a little clue, and I want to follow it up. It will take time to do it—and not a word must be said. As to Black, it was certainly not he. Bad as the man’s character is, in this I could almost answer for his innocence. Accuse him wrongfully, and his anger would know no bounds. He’d come straight off to Sir Dene in revenge and tell of the heaps of tobacco I’ve had, and the long amount I owe for it. There’s brandy as well. Sir Dene—you know the awful fuss he makes about our keeping clear of debt round about here—he is put out with me already, as it is: and he might just send me adrift as he has sent Tom. On my *honour* I have reason to believe it was not Black; and I ask you, as a favour to myself, Otto, to bury what the woman has said in silence.”

That Captain Clanwaring was terribly in earnest in this request; that he was moved almost to agitation in putting it, both his hearers saw. My lady heartily gave in to it without further question, and told him it should drop. Otto tacitly did the same, mentally washing his hands of the affair altogether. It was nothing to him individually: and at the end of the week he was going back to his work in London.

(*To be continued.*)



OPAL, TURQUOISE, AMBER, AND JET.

AMONGST the substances belonging to the mineral kingdom, known as precious stones, few have been held in greater estimation than the opal. So much has this been the case, that the epithet "precious" is used to designate the rarer kinds of this stone, there being several varieties. The opal is hydrated silica, and less hard even than the amethyst; for while the hardness of the sapphire compared with that of the diamond is as 9 to 10, the amethyst is 7 to 10, and the opal only as 6 to 10.

It is termed "pæderos" by the Greeks, and in the Orphic poems is said to imitate the complexion of a lovely youth. Pliny says, "Of all precious stones, it is opal that presents the greatest difficulties of description, it displaying at once the piercing fire of carbunculus, the purple brilliancy of amethystos, and the sea green of smaragdus, the whole blended together and refulgent with a brightness that is quite incredible."

This display of tints is owing to numerous minute and irregular fissures that traverse the stone in a certain direction, containing laminæ of air, that reflect rays of different intensity and various colours. But its structure causes it to be so fragile that an opal set in a ring has been known to split by holding the hand too close to the fire on a frosty day. It is also subject to deterioration; for if the fissures upon which its iridescence depends become choked up by dust or grease, its value is gone. The only way of restoring its beauty is by subjecting it to a certain amount of heat; a hazardous experiment with so brittle a stone.

Like most other gems known to the ancients, opals were originally imported from India; but they are now found extensively in Hungary, Mexico, Honduras, and other places. The finest and largest are discovered embedded in porphyry, in the mines of Czernovitz in Hungary. The largest opal known to the ancients was in the ring of Nonius, on account of which its possessor was proscribed by Marc Antony. It was of the size of a hazel nut, and was valued at a sum equal to £20,000 of our money. When Nonius took to flight, he carried nothing with him but this ring. "How marvellous," adds Pliny, "must have been the cruelty, how marvellous the luxurious passion of Antonius, thus to proscribe a man for the possession of a jewel; and no less marvellous must have been the obstinacy of Nonius, who could thus dote upon what had been the cause of his proscription." The largest opal known is in the Imperial cabinet at Vienna; for this gem £50,000 has been offered and refused. The most beautiful was in possession of the

Empress Josephine. It was named "the burning of Troy," from the numerous red flames playing over its surface.

A belief in the talismanic properties of the opal was prevalent. The Turks are fully convinced that it comes from no earthly mine, but falls direct from heaven in the lightning. Marbodius relates that it confers the gift of invisibility upon the possessor, so that a thief wearing this gem might carry off his plunder in open day. The opal is incapable of being engraved as a signet, but cabalistic rings have been preserved where certain signs have been marked upon the opal; and one is mentioned as also having astrological figures carved upon the circle of gold.

The opal is never cut in facets, but always en cabochon. The polishing is a work of time and care on account of the soft nature of the stone. So delicately has it to be handled, that even the emery powder employed must be adoucie; namely, the emery which has been already used in polishing other gems, and thus deprived of its asperities.

Another opaque-precious stone, also only used cut spherically, is the turquoise. The real turquoise, called *de la vieille roche*, was originally found almost exclusively in Persia, and the Greeks only became acquainted with it through the spoils brought home after the Macedonian campaign, when goblets and dishes were exhibited, as well as armour, profusely decorated with this gem. The finest specimens were found in a mountain called Firuz-cos, about three days' journey from the Caspian Sea. The produce of this mine was claimed exclusively by the Shah; and though many of these turquoises found their way into the market, it was only through the embezzlement of the miners and directors. Chardin mentions that when he visited the royal treasury at Ispahan, he saw stones in the rough, piled high like heaps of grain in the chambers; while leather bags were filled with those already polished to the weight of forty or fifty pounds each.

It is an interesting fact, that on the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, images were found amongst the Aztecs inlaid with turquoises in a manner precisely similar to that practised by the Persians. Longolius mentions an Aztec mask, shown to him by Grimvaldus, the envoy of Charles the Fifth to the Pope, the features of which were represented by turquoise, emerald, and green and red jasper, upon a ground of wood; the eyes were of red amber. The most singular thing is, that the mine from which these stones were taken was never discovered by the Spaniards, nor has the locality even yet been ascertained. The finest turquoises are still obtained from Nishapur; they are carried by Tartar and Persian merchants to the great fair of Nishni-Novogorod. They are also procured from Wady Maghara, in Arabia Petræa. Others have lately been obtained from a strata of sandstone rock at the foot of Mount Sinai; but these, though at first of a remarkably rich azure, are liable to change and fade.

The Oriental turquoise (*de la vieille roche*) is a phosphate and a hydrate of alumina, coloured by copper. But there is a substance termed the Occidental turquoise, that is only petrified bone coloured by copper oxide, or phosphate of iron. This, when first found, generally presents a mottled appearance; but by the application of heat the colour is diffused evenly throughout the surface. It is this Occidental turquoise that is most frequently used for carving in cameo, or cavo, on account of its greater softness.

The turquoise in mediæval times was supposed to be endowed with many wonderful properties. Boetius De Boot relates a number of sufficiently marvellous stories respecting this stone, as coming within his own experience. "The turquoise is believed to strengthen the sight and spirits of the wearer," he says; "but its chief commendation is its protective influence against falls, which, as everybody is assured, it takes upon itself, so that the wearer escapes all hurt—a property beyond the scope of reason. I can solemnly affirm that I always wear one in a ring, the nature of which I can never sufficiently admire."

He then proceeds to relate the manner in which he became possessed of this ring. A neighbour who had been in the habit of wearing a turquoise ring of great beauty, died. His property was put up for sale, and the elder De Boot purchased this ring and presented it to his son. To the great disappointment of the latter, however, the gem had become pale and faded; so much so that, as he expresses it, he thought it scorn to wear so unsightly a gem, and took it to an engraver to have his coat of arms cut upon it. This done, he wore the turquoise ring as a signet. What was his surprise to find the stone gradually recovering its colour, and that at the end of the month its azure hue was restored. But the wonder did not cease here: De Boot was travelling home to Bohemia from Padua, where he had been to take his doctor's degree, when, in the dark, his horse stumbled, and fell with his rider from a bank on to a road ten feet below. Neither horse nor rider was the worse, but when De Boot washed his hands the following morning, he perceived that the turquoise was split in two. He had the larger half reset and continued to wear it, when again he met with an accident which was like to have caused him a broken bone, and again the turquoise took the fracture upon itself, and had to be reset once more. After such proof who could doubt? Not De Boot himself evidently.

The turquoise has always been a favourite gem for the betrothal ring, the fashion having had its origin in the belief that the permanence of its hue would depend upon the constancy of the donor.

Of all the gem-like substances used for personal adornment, amber is of the highest antiquity. It is mentioned by Homer, and is found introduced in the most ancient specimens of Etruscan jewellery. In the collection of the Prince of Canino was a necklace of choice Etruscan workmanship, having pendants in the form of scarabei of alternate

sardonyx and amber. The Greeks termed amber *electron*, from *Elector*, one of the names of the sun-god. Amongst the Romans also, this substance was greatly prized. Pliny tells us that a small figure carved in amber had been known to sell at a higher price than a living slave in vigorous health. In the time of Nero, one of the equestrian order was sent to Germany by Julianus, the manager of the gladiatorial exhibitions, in order to procure a supply of this gem. He succeeded so well, and brought back such vast quantities, that the very nets that protected the podium against the wild beasts, the litters upon which the slain gladiators were carried away, and all the other articles used were studded with amber. Sir Thomas Browne also, in his "*Urn Burial*," mentions amongst the contents of a Roman urn in the possession of Cardinal Farnese, not only jewels, but an ape in agate, and a grass-hopper and an elephant carved in amber.

Great uncertainty prevailed amongst the ancients as to the nature of amber, and many were the legends to which this uncertainty gave rise. After Phaëton had been struck by lightning, his sisters, we are told, were changed to poplars, which every day shed their tears upon the banks of the Eridanus, and to these tears was given the name *electron*. Nicias says that it is a liquid produced by the rays of the sun; that these rays, at the moment of the sun's setting, striking with the greatest force upon the surface of the soil, leave upon it an unctuous sweat, which is carried off by the tides of the ocean, and thrown up on the shore of Germany. According to another author, there is a river "beyond India," the banks of which are frequented by birds called *meleagrides*; these, weeping the death of Meleager, allow their tears to drop into the stream, whereupon they are transformed to amber. A similar belief—that amber was produced by the tears of birds—prevailed amongst the Orientals. This is alluded to by Moore in "*Lalla Rookh*:"

"Around thee shall glisten the loveliest amber
That ever the sorrowing sea-birds have wept."

It was gradually, however, made manifest that amber was neither more nor less than a vegetable product—a kind of gum; hence it acquired the name *succinum*, by which it is now known in natural history. It was found that by boiling in turpentine it could be rendered plastic; and pieces were discovered in which insects, leaves of plants, and other foreign matter had become embedded; proving that the amber must at one time have been in a liquid or semi-liquid state.

Wherever beds of lignite occur amber is found: so that it is very generally diffused over the world. But the shores of the Baltic, between Memel and Königsberg, is the only district that supplies it in quantities. As much as four thousand pounds weight of amber yearly is said to be the average produce of that country. It is mostly found on the sea-shore, but in Prussia there are also mines. They are thus described:—

"First, at the surface of the earth, is formed a stratum of sand. Immediately under this sand is a bed of clay, filled with small flints. Under this clay is a stratum of black earth or turf filled with fossil wood, half decomposed and bituminous; this stratum is extended upon minerals containing little metal except iron, which are consequently pyrites. Lastly, under this bed, the amber is found scattered about in pieces, and sometimes accumulated in heaps." It is accounted for in the following manner:—"The oils in the woody stratum have been impregnated by the acid contained in the clay of the upper stratum, which has descended by the filtration of water. This mixture of oil and acid has become bituminous; the most pure and liquid parts of this bitumen have descended on the mineral stratum, and in traversing it have become charged with particles of iron; and the result of this last combination is the formation of the amber which is found below."

In Shakspeare's time amber would seem to have been fashionable as an ornament, as he more than once alludes to it. When Petruchio promises to take Katherine on a visit to her father, he mentions "amber bracelets" amongst the "bravery" with which she is to be adorned. Amongst the artists of the renaissance period it was chiefly used in the formation of jewel caskets, and such like elegant objects. It is still much valued in the East; but the chief market at present is China, where it is crushed into powder, and burnt as incense. Mouth-pieces for cigars, beads, and other ornaments in this material are, however, extensively manufactured in the workshops of Dantzic, Hamburg, and elsewhere.


The electric properties of amber early attracted attention: it was also believed to be highly medicinal, and was said to have the power of detecting the presence of poison; "for then an appearance like the rainbow flies to and fro in the vessel, attended by the crackling of flame, and gives warning by this double indication." It is still supposed to possess certain virtues. The wearing an amber necklace, it is said, will keep off attacks of erysipelas; and it is also a preservative against sore throat, on account of the circle of electricity maintained, as well as from the warmth of the amber.

Jet (*gagates*) is of the same nature as amber, and is indeed frequently found in the same beds of lignite. It was valued by the ancients chiefly for its supposed virtues; mixed with wine it was thought a sovereign cure for toothache. It was also employed in divination. If it remained unconsumed in the fire, the desire of the interrogator would be accomplished.

Jet was used for ornamental purposes in Britain even before the Roman conquest; large rings of this material, that had served for bracelets and anklets, being frequently met with amongst ancient British remains. The Romans, however, soon learned to appreciate its sombre beauties. When the repairs of the church of St. Gereon

at Cologne were going on in 1846, two stone coffins were disinterred; in one of which a complete set of jet ornaments, supposed to have belonged to a priestess of Cybele, was discovered.

In the middle ages jet was known as black amber, but it does not appear to have been extensively used. It is found in various places in the south of France, and works in jet are carried on in the district of Narbonne. In Wurtemberg also jet is manufactured into buttons, snuff-boxes, bracelets, and such like articles; but there is no place so celebrated for work of this description as Whitby in Yorkshire. Drayton mentions that part of the coast as abounding in jet. The Whitby trade in jet dates back as far as 1598, and it now, in digging and manufacturing, gives employment to upwards of five hundred men, women, and children. The price of Whitby jet varies from ten to eighteen shillings the pound weight, according to its quality. It is stated that the value of the jet obtained and manufactured in England amounts to £20,000 yearly.



OVER THE WATER.

WE had what they called the "dead-lights" put in the ladies' cabin at Gravesend, so that will show what the weather was expected to be in the open sea. In our place, the saloon, things were pitching about before we reached Margate. Rounding the point off Broadstairs, the steamer caught it hot and sharp.

"Never heed a bit of pitching: we've got the wind all for us, and shall make a short passage," said the captain in a hearty tone, by way of consolation to the passengers generally. "A bit o' breeze at sea is pleasant."

Pleasant it might be to him, Captain Tune, tucking in a good dinner, as much at ease as if he had been sitting in his dining-room ashore. Not so pleasant for some of us.

Ramsgate passed, with other landmarks, and away in the open sea, it was just a gale. That, and nothing less. Somebody said so to the man at the wheel: a tall, middle-aged, bronzed-faced fellow in shirt sleeves and a blue waistcoat.

"Bless y're ignorance! This a gale! Why, 'taint half a one. It'll be a downright fair passage, this 'un will, shorter nor ord'nary."

"What do you call a gale—if this is not one?"

"I ain't allowed to talk: you may see it writ up."

"Writ up," it was. "Passengers are requested not to talk to the man at the wheel." But if he had been allowed to talk, and talked till now, he'd never have convinced some of the unhappy creatures around that the state of wind, then blowing, was not a gale.

It whistled in the sails, it roared over the paddle-wheels, it seemed to play at pitch-and-toss with the sea. The waves heaved up with mountain force, and then broke down like mad: the steamer rolled, and lurched, and righted herself; and then lurched and rolled again. Captain Tune stood aloft with equanimity, apparently enjoying it, the gold band on his cap glistening in the sun. We got his name from the boat bills: and a jolly, courteous, attentive captain he seemed to be. But for the pitching and tossing and general discomfort, it would have been called beautiful weather. The air was bright; the sun as hot as it is in July, although September was all but out, and October in.

"Johnny. Johnny Ludlow."

The voice—Mr. Brandon's—was too faint to be squeaky. He sat mid-ships on a camp stool, his back against the cabin walls—or whatever the boarding was—wrapped in a plaid. A yellow handkerchief was tied cornerwise over his head, partly to keep his cap from flying off,

partly as a protection to his ears. The handkerchief hid most of his face but his little nose; which was looking pinched and nearly as yellow as the silk.

"Did you call me, sir?"

"I wish you'd see if you can get to my back tail pocket, Johnny. I've been trying for this ten minutes, and do nothing but find my hands hopelessly entangled in the plaid. There's a tin box of lozenges there."

"Do you feel ill, sir?" I asked, as I found the box, and gave it to him.

"Never was ill at sea in my life, Johnny, in the way you mean. But the motion always gives me the most frightful headache imaginable. How are you?"

The less said about how I was, the better. All I hoped was he'd not keep me talking.

"Where's the Squire?" he asked.

I pointed to a distant heap on the deck, from which groans might be heard occasionally: and just managed to speak in answer.

"He seems uncommonly ill, sir."

"Well, he *would* come, you know, Johnny. Tell him he ought to take——"

What he ought to take was lost in the rush I had to make to the leeward side of the ship.

After all, I suppose it was a quick and good, though rough passage, for Boulogne-sur-Mer was sighted before we thought for. As the stiller I kept the better I was, there was nothing to do but to sit motionless and stare at it.

You'll never guess what was taking us across the Channel. Old Brandon called it from the first a wild-goose chase: but, go, the Squire would. He was after that gentleman who had played havoc with so many people's hearts and money, and had, so to say, scattered ruin wholesale—Mr. Clement Pell.

Not a trace had the public been able to obtain as to the direction of the Pells' flight; not a clue to the spot in which they might be hiding themselves. The weeks had gone on since their departure: August passed into September, September was passing: and for all that could be discovered of them, they might as well never have existed. The committee for winding up the miserable affairs raged and fumed and pitied, and wished they could just put their hands on the man who had wrought the evil; Squire Todhetley raged and fumed also on his private score; but none of them were the nearer finding Pell. In my whole life I had never seen the Squire so much put out. It was not altogether the loss of the two hundred pounds he had been (as he persisted in calling it) swindled out of; it was the distress he had to witness daily around him. I do think nothing would have given him more satisfaction than to join a mob in administering lynch law to Clement Pell, and

to tar and feather him first. Before this happened, the Squire had talked of going to the seaside : but he'd not listen to a word on the subject now : only to speak of it put him out of temper. Tod was away. He received an invitation to stay with some people in Gloucestershire, who had good game preserves ; and was off the next day. And things were in this lively state at home : the Squire grumbling, Mrs. Todhetley driving about with one or other of the children in the mild donkey-cart, and I fit to eat my head off with having nothing to do : when some news arrived of the probable sojourn-place of the Clement Pells.

The news was not much. And perhaps hardly to be called reliable. Mr. and Mrs. Stirling at the Court had been over to Paris for a fortnight : taking the baby with them. I must say, that Mrs. Stirling was always having babies—if anybody cares for the information. Before one could walk, another was sure to arrive. Of course it was her own affair ; nobody had a right to grumble at it : only it must have been an inconvenience on occasion. As witness this short trip to Paris. The baby had to be taken ! And not only the baby but the baby's nursemaid Charlotte. Old Brandon, remarking upon it, said he'd rather travel with half a score mischievous growing boys than one baby : and *they* were about the worst calamity he could think of.

Well, in coming home, the Stirling party had just put themselves on board the Boulogne boat to proceed to Folkestone, and the nursemaid was sitting on deck with the baby on her lap, when, just as the steamer was moving away, she saw, or thought she saw, Constance Pell, standing on the shore a little apart from the crowd gathered there to watch the boat off. Mrs. Stirling told the nurse she must be mistaken ; but Charlotte held to it that she was not. As chance had it, Squire Todhetley was at the Court with old Stirling when they got home ; and he heard this. It put him into a commotion. He questioned Charlotte closely, but she never wavered in her statement.

"I am positive it was Miss Constance Pell, sir," she repeated. "She had on a thick blue veil, and one of them new-fashioned large round capes. Just as I happened to be looking at her—not thinking it was anybody I knew—a gust of wind took the veil right up above her bonnet, and I saw it was Miss Constance Pell. She pulled at the veil with both her hands, in a scuffle like, to get it before her face again."

"Then I'll go off to Boulogne," said the Squire with stern resolution. And back he came to Dyke Manor full of it.

"It will be a wild-goose chase," observed Mr. Brandon, who had called in. "If Pell has removed himself no further away than Boulogne—that is, allowing he has got out of England at all—he is a greater fool than I took him for."

"Wild-goose chase or not, I shall go," said the Pater hotly. "And take Johnny : he'll be useful as an interpreter."

"I will go with you," came the unexpected rejoinder of Mr. Brandon. "I want a bit of a change."

And so, here we were en route for Boulogne, ploughing the waves in the London steamer, on the wild-goose chase after Clement Pell.

Just as the passengers had come to the conclusion that they must die of it, the steamer shot into Boulogne Harbour. She was tolerably long swinging round; then was made fast, and we began to land. Mr. Brandon took off his yellow turban and shook his cap out.

"Johnny, I'd never have come if I'd known it was going to be like this," moaned the poor Squire—and every trace of red had gone out of his face. "No, not even to catch Clement Pell. What on earth is that crowd for?"

It looked to be about five hundred people; they were pushing and crushing each other in a fight for places to see us land and go through the custom-house. No need to tell of this: not a reader of the paper but must know it well himself.

The first thing clear to my senses amid the general confusion was the hearing my name shouted out by the Squire in the custom-house.

"Johnny Ludlow!"

He was standing before two Frenchmen in queer hats, who sat behind a table or counter, asking him questions and preparing to write down the answers: what his name was, and how many years he had, and where he was born, just as though he were a footman in want of a place. Not a word could he understand, and looked round for me helplessly. As to my French—well, I knew it pretty well, and talked often with our French master at Dr. Frost's: but you must not think I was as fluent in it as if I'd been a Frenchman. It was rather the other way.

We put up at the *Hôtel des Bains*: a good hotel—as is well known—but nothing to look at from the street. Mr. Brandon had been in Boulogne before, and always used it. The table d'hôte restored the Squire's colour and spirits together: and by the time dinner was over, he felt ready to encounter the sea again. As to Mr. Brandon, he made his meal of some watery broth, two slices of melon, and a bowlful of pounded sugar.

The great question was—to discover whether the Clement Pells were there, and to find them out. Mr. Brandon's opinion never varied—that Charlotte had been mistaken and they were not in the place at all. Allowing, for argument's sake, that they were there, he said, they would no doubt be living partly in concealment, and it might not answer for us to go inquiring about them openly, lest they got to hear of it, and took measures to secure themselves. There was sense in that.

The next day we went strolling up to the postal bureau in Old Men's Street—*Rue des Vieillards*—the wind blowing us round the corners sharply; and there inquired for the address of the Clement Pells.

The people were not over-civil: stared as if they'd never been asked for an address before; and shortly affirmed that no such a name was known *there*.

"Why, of course not," said old Brandon quietly, as we strolled down again. "They'd not be in the place under their own name—if they are here at all."

And there would lie the difficulty.

That wind, that the man at the wheel had scoffed at when called a gale, was at any rate the beginning of one. It grew higher and higher, chopping round to the south-west, and for three days we had it kindly. On the second day not a boat could get out or in; and there were no bathing machines. The sea was like a great surging plain, full of angry tumult—but it was a grand sight to see. The waves dashed over the pier, ducking the three or four venturesome spirits who got on. I was one—and got a good blowing up for it from Mr. Brandon.

The gale passed. The weather set in again calm and lovely; but we seemed to be no nearer hearing anything of the Clement Pells. So far as that went, the time was being wasted: but I don't think any of us cared much about that. We kept our eyes open, looking out for them, and asked questions in a quiet way: at the *établissement*, where the dancing went on; at the libraries; and of the pew women at the churches. No; no success: and time went on to the second week in October. On account of the remarkably fine warm weather, the season and amusements were protracted.

One Friday morning I was sitting on the pier in the sunshine, listening to a couple of musicians, who were there every day. He had a violin; she played a guitar and sang "Figaro." An old gentleman by me said he had heard her sing the same song for nearly a score of years past. The town kept very full—for the weather was more like summer than autumn. There were moments, and this was one, that I wished more than ever Tod was over.

Strolling back off the pier and along the port, picking my way amid the cords of the fishing-boats, stretched across the path, I met face to face—Constance Pell. The thick blue veil, just as Charlotte had described it, was drawn over her bonnet: but something in her shape struck me, and I saw her features through the veil. She saw me too, and turned her head sharply away over the harbour.

I went on without notice, making believe not to have seen her. Glancing round presently, I saw her cross the road and begin to come back on the other side by the houses. Knowing that the only chance was to trace her to her home, and not to let her see I was doing it, I stopped by one of the boats, and began talking to a fisherman, never turning my head towards her at all. She passed quickly, on to the long street, once glancing back at me. When she was fairly on her way, I

went tearing at the top of my speed to the front of the hotel, the port entrance; straight through the yard, and up to my room, which faced the street. There she was, walking onwards always, and very quickly. Close by the chemist's shop at the opposite corner, she turned to look behind; no doubt looking after me, and no doubt gratified that I was nowhere to be seen. Then she went on again.

Neither the Squire nor Mr. Brandon was in the hotel, that I could find; so I had to take the matter on myself, and do the best I could. Letting her get well ahead, I followed her cautiously. She turned up the Grande Rue, and I turned also, keeping her in view. The streets were tolerably full, and though she looked behind several times, I am sure she did not see me.

Up the hill of the Grande Rue, past the Vice-Consulate, under the gateway of the Upper Town, through the Upper Town itself, and out at another gateway. I thought she was never going to stop. Away further yet, to the neighbourhood of a little place called Mâquétra—but I am not sure that I spell the word aright. There she turned into a small house that had a garden before it.

They call me a muff at home, as you have heard often: and there's no doubt I have shown myself a muff and a double muff more than once in my life. I was one then. What I ought to have done was, to have gone back the instant I had seen her enter: what I really did was, to linger about behind the hedge, and try to get a glimpse through it. It skirted the garden: a long, narrow garden, running down from the side of the house.

It was but a minute or two in all. And I was really turning back when a servant maid in a kind of short brown bedgown (it's what Hannah calls the things at home), black petticoat, grey-stockinged feet in wooden sabots, and no shoes, came out at the gate, carrying a flat basket made of black and white straw.

"Does Monsieur Pell live there?" I asked, waiting until she was abreast.

"Monsieur *Qui?*" said the girl.

"Pell. Or Clement Pell."

"There is no gentlemen at all lives there," returned she, changing her language to very understandable English. "Only one Madame and her young meeses."

I seemed to take in the truth in a minute: they were there, but he was not. "I think they must be the friends I am in search of," was my remark. "What is the name?"

"Brune."

"Brune?—Oh Brown. A lady and four young ladies?"

"Yes, but that's it. Bon jour, Monsieur."

She hurried onwards, the sabots clattering. I turned leisurely to take another look at the hedge and the little gate hidden in it, and saw a

blue veil fluttering inwards. Constance Pell, deeper than I, had been gazing after me.

Where had they got to? Getting back to the hotel at the speed of my heels, I could not find either of them. Mr. Brandon might be taking a warm sea bath, the waiters thought, and the Squire a cold one. I went about to every likely place, and went in vain. The dinner-bell was ringing when they got in—tired to death, having been for some prolonged ramble over beyond Capécure. I told them in their rooms while they were washing their hands—but as to stirring in it before dinner, both were too exhausted.

"I said I thought they must be here, Brandon," cried the Squire in triumph.

"He's not here now, according to Johnny," squeaked old Brandon.

After dinner, more time was lost. First of all, in discussing what they should do; next, in whether it should be done that night. You see, it was not Mrs. Pell they wanted, but her husband. As it was then dark, it was thought best to leave it till morning.

We went up in state about half-past ten, taking a coach, and passing en route the busy scene of the market. The coach seemed to have no springs: Mr. Brandon complained that it shook him to pieces. This was Saturday, you know. The Squire meant to be distantly polite to Mrs. and the Miss Pells, but to insist upon having the address given him of Mr. Pell. "We'll not take the coach quite up to the door," said he, "or we may not get in." Indeed, the getting in seemed to be a matter of doubt: old Brandon's opinion was that they'd keep every window and door barred, rather than admit us.

So the coach set us down outside the furthestmost barrier of the Upper Town, and we walked on, I being pioneer, to the gate, went up the path, and knocked at the door.

As soon as the servant opened it—she had the same brown bedgown on, and the same grey stockings in the wooden sabots—the Squire dexterously slipped past her into the passage to make sure of a footing. She offered no opposition: drew back, in fact, to make room.

"I must come in; I've got business here," said he, almost as if in apology.

"The Messieurs are free to enter," was her answer; "but they come to a house empty."

"I want to speak to Madame Brown," returned the Squire, in a determined tone.

"Madame Brown" (it's quite impossible to spell the word as she pronounced it) "and the Mees Browns are depart," she said. "They depart at daylight this morning, by the first convoi." Which meant "Train."

We were in the front parlour then: a small room barely furnished.

The Squire got into one of his tempers : he thought the servant was playing with him. Old Brandon sat down against the wall, and nodded his head. He saw how it was—that they had really gone.

But the Squire stormed a little, and would not believe it. The girl, catching one word in ten, for he talked very fast, wondered at his anger.

The young gentlemen was at the place yesterday, she said, glancing at me : it was a malheur but they had come up before the morning, if they wanted so much to see Madame.

"She has not gone ; I know better," roared the Squire. "Look here, young woman—what's your name, though?"

"Mathilde," said she, standing quite at ease, her hands turned on her hips and her elbows out.

"Well then I warn you that it's of no use your trying to deceive *me*. I shall go into every room of this house till I find Madame Brown—and if you attempt to stop me, I'll bring the police up here. Tell her that in French, Johnny."

"I hear," said Mathilde, who had a very deliberate way of speaking. "I comprehend. The Messieurs go into the rooms if they like, but I go with, to see they not carry off any of the article. This is the salon."

Waiting for no further permission, he was out of the salon like a shot. Mr. Brandon stayed nodding against the wall ; he had not the slightest reverence for the Squire's diplomacy at any time. The girl slipped off her sabots and put her feet into some green worsted slippers that stood in the narrow passage. My belief was she thought we wanted to look over the house with a view of taking it.

It was small, but great enough for a *salle à manger*, she said, showing the room behind—a little place that had literally nothing in it but an oval dining-table, some matting underneath, and six common bare chairs against the walls. Upstairs were four bed-rooms, bare also. As to the fear of our carrying off any of the articles, we might have found a difficulty. Except beds, chairs, drawers, and washhand-stands, there was nothing to carry. Mrs. Brown and the Miss Browns were not there : and the rooms were in as much order as if they had not been occupied for a month : Mathilde had been at them all the morning. The Squire's face was a picture when he went down : he began to realize the fact that he was once more left in the lurch.

"It is much health up here and the house fine," said the girl, leaving her shoes in the passage side by side with the sabots, and walking into the salon in her stockings without ceremony. "And if the Messieurs thought to let it, and would desire to let a good servant with it, I would be happy to serve them, me. I sleep in the house, or at home, as my patrons please ; and I am very good to make the kitchen——"

"So you haven't found 'em!" interrupted old Brandon sarcastically.

The Squire gave a kind of howl. He was put out—and no mistake. Mathilde, in answer to questions, readily told all she knew.

About six weeks ago, she thought it was—but no, it must be seven, now she remembered—Madame Brown and the four Mees Browns took this house of the propriétaire, one Monsieur Bourgois, marchand d'épicerie, and engaged her as servant, recommended to her by M. Bourgois. Madame and the young ladies had lived very quietly, giving but little trouble; entrusted her to do all the commissions at the butcher's and elsewhere, and never questioned her fidelity in the matter of the sous received in change at market. The previous day when she got home with the pork chops and sausages, which she was going after when the young gentlemen spoke to her—nodding to me—Madame was in a state; all bouleversée; first because Mees Constance had been down to the town, which Madame did not like her to do; next because of a letter——

At this point the Squire made an interruption: Did she mean to imply that the ladies never went out?

No, never, continued Mathilde. Madame found herself not strong to walk out, and it was not proper for the young demoiselles to go walk without her—as the Messieurs would doubtless understand. But Mees Constance had the ennui with that, and three or four times she had walked out without Madame's knowing. Yesterday, par exemple, Madame was storming at her when she (Mathilde) came home with the pork, and the young ladies her sisters stormed at her——

"There; enough of that," snapped the Squire. "What took them away?"

That was the letter, resumed the girl in her deliberate manner. It was the other thing, that letter was, that had contributed to the bouleversement of Madame. The letter had been delivered while she was gone to the pork shop, by hand, she supposed; it told Madame the triste news of the illness of a dear relative; and Madame had to leave all at a blow in consequence. There was confusion. Madame and the young ladies packing, and she, Mathilde, when her dinner had been cooked and eaten, running quick for the propriétaire—who came back with her. Madame paid him up to the end of the next week, when the month would be finished and—that was all.

Old Brandon took up the word. "Mr. Brown?—he was not here at all, was he?"

"No at all," replied Mathilde. "Madame's fancy figured to her he might be coming one of these soon days: if so, I refer him to M. Bourgois."

"Refer him for what?"

"Nay, I not ask, Monsieur. For the information, I conclude, of where she go and why she go. Madame talk to the propriétaire with the salon door shut."

So that was all we got. Mathilde readily gave M. Bourgois' address, and we went away. She had been civil through it all, and the Squire slipped a franc into her hand. By the profusion of thanks he received in return, it might have been a louis d'or.

Monsieur Bourgois' spice shop—grocer's in English—was in the Upper Town, not far from the convent of the Dames Ursulines. He said—speaking from behind his counter while weighing out a lump of butter—that Madame Brown had entrusted him with a sealed letter to Monsieur Brown in case he arrived. It contained, Madame had remarked to him, only a line or two to explain where they had gone, as he would naturally be disappointed at not finding them; and she had confided the trust to him that he would only deliver it into M. Brown's own hand. *He* did not know where Madame had gone. As M. Bourgois did not speak a word of English, or the Squire a word of French, it's hard to say when they'd have arrived at an explanation, left to themselves.

"Now look here," said Mr. Brandon, in his dry, but uncommonly clear-sighted way, as we went home, "*Clement Pell's expected to come here.* We must keep a sharp watch on the boats."

The Squire did not see it. "As if he'd stay in England all this while, Brandon!"

"We don't know where he has stayed. I have thought all along he was as likely to be in England as elsewhere: there's no place a man's safer in, well concealed. The very fact of his wife and daughters remaining in this frontier town would be nearly enough to prove that he was still in England."

"Then why on earth *did* he stay?" retorted the Squire. "Why hasn't he got away before?"

"I don't know. Might fear there was danger perhaps in making the attempt. He has lain perdu in some quiet corner; and, now that he thinks the matter has partly blown over and the scent is less keen, he means to come. That's what his wife has waited for."

The Squire seemed to grasp the whole at once. "I wonder when he will be here?"

"Within a day or two, you may be sure, or not at all," said Mr. Brandon with a nod. "She'll write to stop his coming if she knows where to write to. The sight of Johnny Ludlow has startled her. You were a great muff to let yourself be seen, young Johnny."

"Yes, sir, I know I was."

"Live and learn, live and learn," said he, getting out his tin box. "One cannot put old heads upon young shoulders."

Sunday morning. After breakfast I and Mr. Brandon were standing under the porte cochère, looking about us: at the banking house opposite, at a man going into the chemist's shop with his hand tied up, at the marchand de cocò with his gay attire and his jingling bells and his shouted tra-la-la-la: at anything in short that there might be to

see, and so while away the half-hour before church time. The Squire had gone strolling out, saying he should be back in time for service. People were passing down towards the port, little groups of them in twos and threes; apart from the servant maids in their white caps, who were coming back from mass. One of the hotel waiters stood by us, his white napkin in his hand; he suddenly remarked, with the easy affability of the Frenchman of his class (which, so far as I know, and I've seen more of France since then, never degenerates into disrespect), that some of these people might be expecting friends by the excursion boat and were going down to see it come in.

"What excursion boat?" asked Mr. Brandon of the waiter, quicker than he generally spoke.

"One from Ramsgate," the man replied. "It was to leave the other side very early, so as to get to Boulogne by ten o'clock: and to depart again at six in the afternoon." Mr. Brandon looked at the speaker; and then at me. Putting his hand on my shoulder, he drew me towards the port; charging the waiter to be sure and tell Mr. Todhelly when he returned, that we had gone to see the Ramsgate boat come in. It was past ten then.

"If Clement Pell comes at all it will be by this excursion boat, Johnny," said he impressively as we hurried on.

"Why do you think so, Mr. Brandon?"

"Well, I do. The people who make excursion trips are not those likely to know him, or that he'd be afraid of. He'll hide himself away on it amid the crowd. It is Sunday also—another reason. What flag is that up on the signal post by the pier house, Johnny. Your eyes are younger than mine."

"It's the red one, sir."

"For a steamer in sight. She's not in yet then. It must be for *her*. It's hardly likely there'd be another one to come in this morning."

"There she is!" I exclaimed. For at that moment a steamer came riding on close up to the harbour's mouth, pitching a little in her course.

"Run you on, Johnny," said Mr. Brandon in excitement. "I'll come as quick as I can, but my legs are not as fleet as yours. Get a good place close to the cords, and look out sharply."

It was a bright day, somewhat colder than it had been, and the wind high enough to make it tolerably rough for any but good sailors—as the sparkles of white foam on the blue sea betrayed. I got a good place behind the cord, close to the landing-ladder: a regular crowd had collected, early though it was, Sunday being an idle day with some of the French. As to the boat, being moored fast below us, it was crowded with pale faces.

Up came the passengers, mounting the nearly perpendicular ladder: assisted by the men of the boat below; and by two appariteurs, in

their cocked hats and Sunday clothes, above. It was nearly low water: another quarter of an hour and they'd have missed their tide: pleasant, that would have been, for the excursionists. As only one could ascend the ladder at once, I had the opportunity of seeing them all.

Scores came: my sight was getting half bewildered: and there had been none that resembled Clement Pell. Some of them looked fearfully ill still and had not put up the ears of their caps or turned down their muffling coat and cloak collars: so, to get a good view of these faces was not possible—and Clement Pell might have already landed, for all I could be sure of to the contrary. Cloaks were tolerably common in those days, and travelling caps had ears to them.

It was like a stroke of fortune. A lady with a little boy behind her came up the ladder, and the man standing next to me—he was very tall and big—went at once into a state of excitement. "C'est toi! c'est toi, ma sœur!" he called out. She turned at the voice, and there ensued a batch of kissing on each of their two cheeks. A stout dame at my shoulder, in a cap and cloak, pushed forward frantically to take and give a share in the kissing: but a douanier marched off the passenger towards the custom-house with some angry words. She retorted on him not to be so *difficile*, turned round and said she must wait for her other little one: while the couple on this side leaned over the cord, lifted up the lad, and began to kiss *him*. Altogether there was no end of clatter and commotion. I was eclipsed: pushed back into the shade, and could only see daylight by fits and snatches.

The other little one was appearing over the top of the ladder then: a mite of a girl child, apparently furnished with huge red whiskers and a red beard—for her face was held close to the face of the gentleman carrying her, and the red hair really belonged to him. I supposed he was the husband. He wore a full cloak, his cap-peak was drawn well over his eyebrows, and its ears covered his cheeks: in fact not much could be seen of him but his hands and his nose. Was he the husband? The mother, thanking him volubly in broken English for his kind politeness in carrying up her little girl, would have taken her from him; but he made a motion as if he'd carry her to the custom-house, and stepped onwards, looking neither to the left nor right. At that moment my tall neighbour and the stout dame raised a loud greeting to the child, clapping their hands and blowing kisses: *he* put out his long arm and pulled at the sleeve of the young one's pelisse. It caused the gentleman to halt and look round. Enough to make him.

Why—where had I seen the eyes? They were close to mine, and seemed quite familiar. The remembrance flashed over me with a rush. They were Clement Pell's.

It is nearly the only thing about a man or woman that cannot be disguised—the expression of the eye. Once you are familiar with any one's eye and know its expression by heart; the soul that looks out of

it; you cannot be mistaken in the eye, though you meet it in an African desert, it's owner disguised as a war-painted cannibal.

But for seeing the eyes full, I should never have known him. He went straight on instantly, not suspecting I was there, for the two hid me completely, and I had had but a view between the tall man's side and his lifted arm. The little child's face was pressed close in front of Mr. Pell's: a feeling came over me that he was carrying it so, the better to conceal himself. As he went into the custom-house, I pushed backwards out of the crowd; saw Mr. Brandon, and whispered to him. He nodded quietly: as much as to say he had thought Pell would come.

"Johnny, we must follow him: but we must not let him see us on any account. I daresay he is going all the way up to Mâquétra—or whatever you call the place."

Making our way round to the door by which the passengers were let out, we mixed with the mob gathered there, and waited. The custom-house was not particular with Sunday excursionists, and they came swarming out by dozens. When Pell appeared, I jogged Mr. Brandon's elbow.

The touters, shrieking out the merits of their respective hotels, and thrusting their cards in Pell's face, seemed to startle him, for he shrank back. Comprehending the next moment, he said No no, No no, on each side him, passed on to the waiting carriages, and stepped into one that was shut up. The driver was a couple of minutes at least at the door, taking his orders: perhaps there was some mutual bother, the one jabbering French, the other English. But it drove off at last.

"Now then, Johnny, for that other closed coach. We shall have to do without church this morning. Mind you make the coachman understand what he is to do."

"Suivez cette voiture qui vient de partir: mais pas trop près." The man gave back a hearty "Oui, monsieur," as if he understood the case.

It was a crawling kind of journey. The first coach did not hurry itself, and took bye-ways to get to its destination. It turned into the Rue de la Coupe, opposite our hotel, went through the Rue de l'Hôpital, and thence to unknown regions. All I knew was we went up a worse hill than that of the Grande Rue, and arrived circuitously at Mâquétra. Mr. Brandon had stretched his head out as we passed the hotel, but could not see the Squire.

"It's his affair, you know, Johnny. Not mine."

Clement Pell got out at his gate, and went in. We followed cautiously, and found the house door on the latch, Mathilde having probably forgotten to close it after Mr. Pell. They stood in the salon: Mathilde in a handsome light gown of chintz, white stockings and shoes, for she had been to the nine o'clock mass: he with a strangely bewil-

dered, blank expression on his face as he listened to her explanation.

"Yes, monsieur, it is sure they are depart : it is but the morning of yesterday. The propriétaire, he have the letter for you that Madame confide to him. He—Tiens, voici encore ces Messieurs !"

Surprise at our appearance in the room must have made her change her language. Clement Pell gave one look and turned his face to the window, hoping to escape unrecognized. Mr. Brandon ordered me to the English church in the Upper Town, saying I should not be much late for that, and told Mathilde he did not want her.

"I shall make the little promenade and meet my bon ami," observed Mathilde with independence, as I proceeded to do as I was bid. And, what took place between the two we left, can only be related at second-hand.

"Now, Mr. Pell, will you spare me your attention?" began Mr. Brandon.

Clement Pell turned then, and took off his cloak and cap, seeing that it would be worse than useless to attempt to keep the farce going. With the red wig on his head and the red hair on his face, no unobservant man would then have recognized him for the great ex-financier.

Mr. Brandon was cold, uncompromising, but civil ; Clement Pell at first subdued and humble. Taking courage after a bit, he became slightly restive, somewhat inclined to be insolent.

"It is a piece of assurance for you to come here at all, sir ; tracking me over my threshold to my very hearthstone, as if you were a detective officer. What's the meaning of it ? I don't owe you money."

"I have told you the meaning," replied Mr. Brandon—feeling that his voice had never been more squeaky, but showing no sign of wrath. "The affair is not mine at all, but Squire Todhetley's. I was down on the port when you landed—went to look for you, in fact ; the Squire did not happen to be in the way, so I followed you up in his place."

"With what object ?"

"Why dear me, Mr. Pell, you are not deaf. I mentioned the object : the Squire wants his two hundred pounds refunded. A very clever trick, your getting it of him !"

Clement Pell drew in his lips : his face had no more colour in it than chalk. He sat with his back to the wall by the window, his hands restlessly playing with his steel watch-chain—what had gone with the thick gold one he used to wear ? Mr. Brandon had a chair by the table, and faced him.

"Perhaps you would like me to refund to you all my creditors' money wholesale, as well as that of Mr. Todhetley !" retorted Clement Pell with aggravated mockery.

"I have nothing to do with them, Mr. Pell. Neither, I imagine, does Mr. Todhetley intend to make their business his. Let each man mind

alone his own course and stand or fall by it. If you chooseto assure me you don't owe a fraction to anybody else in the world, I shall not tell you that you do. I am speaking now for my friend, Squire Todhetley : I would a great deal rather he was here to deal with you himself ; but action has accidentally been forced upon me."

"I know that I owe a good deal of money : or, rather, that a good many people have lost money through me," returned Clement Pell after a pause. "It is my misfortune ; not my fault."

Mr. Brandon coughed a dry cough. "As to its not being your fault, Mr. Pell, the less said about that the better. It was in your power to pull up in time, I conclude, when you first saw things were going wrong."

Clement Pell lifted his hand to his forehead, as if he felt a pain there. It tilted the red hair back ever so little and made him look more like himself. "You don't know ; you don't know," he irritably said,—a great deal of impatience in his tone.

"No, I'm thankful that I *don't*," said Mr. Brandon, taking out his tin box and coolly eating a lozenge. "I am very subject to heartburn, Mr. Pell. If ever you get it, you try magnesia lozenges. An upset, such as this affair of yours has been, would drive a man of my nerves into a lunatic asylum."

"It may do the same by me before I've done with it," returned Clement Pell. And Mr. Brandon thought he meant what he said.

"Any way, it's said that some of those who are ruined will be there before long, Mr. Pell. You might perhaps feel a qualm of conscience if you saw the misery it has entailed."

"And do you think I don't feel it?" returned Mr. Pell, catching up his breath. "You are mistaken if you suppose I do not."

"About Squire Todhetley's two hundred pounds, sir?" resumed old Brandon, swallowing the last of the lozenge. "Is it convenient to you to give it me?"

"No, it is not," was the firm answer. And he seemed to be turning restive again.

"But I will *thank* you to do so, Mr. Pell."

"I cannot do so."

"And not to make excuses over it. They will only serve to waste time."

"I have not got the money : I cannot give it."

Upon that, they set on again, hammer and tongs. Mr. Brandon insisting upon the money ; Pell vowing to goodness he had not got it, and could not and would not give so much as a ten-pound note of it. Old Brandon never lost his temper, never raised his voice : but he said a thing or two that must have stung Pell's pride. At the end of twenty minutes, he was no nearer the money than before. Pell's patience gave signs of wearing out : Mr. Brandon could have gone quietly on till bed-time.

"You must be aware that this is not a simple debt, Mr. Pell. It is—in fact—something worse. For your own sake it may be well to refund it."

"Once more, I say I cannot."

"Am I to understand that's as much as to say you will not?"

"If you like to take it so. It is most painful to me, Mr. Brandon, to have to meet you in this spirit, but you force it on me. The case is this: I am not able to refund the debt to Squire Todhetley, and he has no power to enforce his claim to it."

"I don't know that."

"I do, though. It is best to be plain, as we have come to this, Mr. Brandon; and then perhaps you will bring the interview to an end, and leave me to peace. You have no power over me in this country; none whatever. Before you can have that, there are certain forms and ceremonies to be gone through in a legal court; you must make-over the——"

"Squire Todhetley's is not a case of debt," interrupted old Brandon. "If it were, he would have no right in honour to come here and seek payment over the other creditors."

"It is a case of debt, and nothing else. As debt only could you touch me upon it here—and not then until you have proved it and got judgment upon it in England. Say, if you will, that I have committed murder or forged bank-notes—you could not touch me here unless the French government gave me up at the demand of the English government. Get all the police of the town to this room if you will, Mr. Brandon, and they would only laugh at you. They have no power over me. I have committed no offence against this country."

"Look here," said old Brandon, nodding his head. "I know a bit about French law; perhaps as much as you: knew it years ago. What you say is true enough: an Englishman, whether debtor or criminal in his own land, cannot be touched here, unless certain forms and ceremonies, as you express it, are first gone through. But you have rendered yourself amenable to French law on another point, Clement Pell; I could consign you to the police this moment, if I chose, and they must take you."

Clement Pell quite laughed at what he thought the worthless boast. But he might have known old Brandon better. "What is my crime, sir?"

"You have come here and are staying here under a false name—Brown. That is a crime in the sight of French law: and one that the police, if they get to know of it, are obliged to take cognizance of."

"No!" exclaimed Clement Pell, his face changing a little.

"Yes," said Mr. Brandon. "Were I to give you up for it to-day, they would put you on board the first boat leaving for your own country. Once on the opposite shore, you may judge whether Squire Todhetley would let you escape again."

It was all true. Mr. Pell saw it. His restless fingers nervously trembled; his pale face had a piteous aspect.

"You need not be afraid of me: I am not likely to do it," said Mr. Brandon: "I do not think the Squire would. But you see now what lies within his power. Therefore I would recommend you to come to terms with him."

Clement Pell rubbed his brow with his handkerchief, and the wig went tilting a little back. He was driven into a corner.

"I have told you truth, Mr. Brandon, in saying that I am not able to repay the two hundred pounds. I am not. Will he take half of it?"

"I cannot tell. I have no authority to say he will."

"Then I suppose he must come up here. As it has come to this, I had better see him. If he will accept one hundred pounds, and undertake not to molest me further, I will hand it to him. It will leave me nearly entirely without means: but you have got me in a hole. Stay a moment—a thought is striking me. Are there any more of my creditors in the town at your back, Mr. Brandon?"

"Not that I am aware of. I have seen none."

"On your honour?"

Mr. Brandon opened his little eyes, and took a stare at Pell. "My word is the same as my honour, sir. Always has been, and always will be."

"I beg your pardon. A man, driven to my position, naturally fears an enemy at every corner. And—if my enemies were to find me out here, they might be too much for me."

"Of course they would," assented Mr. Brandon by way of comfort.

"Will you go for Mr. Todhetley? What is done, must be done to-day, for I shall be away by the first train in the morning."

Shrewd old Brandon considered the matter before speaking. "By the time I get back here with the Squire, you may have already departed, Mr. Pell."

"No, on my honour. How should I do it? There's no train leaves the town before six to-night: the water is low in the harbour and no boat could float. As it has come to this I will see Squire Todhetley: and the sooner the better."

"I'll trust you," said Mr. Brandon.

"Time was when I was deemed more worthy of trust: perhaps was more worthy of it"—and the involuntary tears rose to his eyes. "Mr. Brandon, believe me—no man has suffered by this as I have suffered. Do you think I did it for pleasure?—or to afford myself wicked gratification? No. I'd have forfeited nearly all my remaining life to prevent the smash. My affairs had got into their awful state by degrees; and I had not the power to retrieve them. God alone knows what the penalty has been to me—and what it will be to my life's end."

"Ay. I can picture it pretty tolerably, Mr. Pell."

"No one can picture it," he returned with emotion. "Look at my ruined family—the position of my sons and daughters. Not one of them can hold up their heads in the world again without the consciousness that they may be pointed at as the children of Clement Pell the swindler. What is to be their future?—how are they to get along? You must have heard many a word of abuse applied to me lately, Mr. Brandon: but there are few men on this toilsome earth more in need of compassion than I—if misery and suffering can constitute the need. When morning breaks, I wish the day was done; when night comes, I toss and turn and wonder how I shall lie through it."

"I am sorry for you," said Mr. Brandon, moved to pity, for he saw how the man needed it. "Were I you, I would go back home and face my debts. Face the trouble, and in time you may be able to live it down."

Clement Pell shook his head hopelessly. Had it been debt alone, he might never have come away.

The sequel to all this had yet to come. Perhaps some of you may guess it. Mr. Brandon pounced upon the Squire as he was coming out of church in the Rue du Temple, and took him back in another coach. Arrived at the house they found the door fast. Mathilde appeared presently, arm in arm with her sweetheart—a young man in white boots with ear-rings in his ears. Was M. Brown of depart, she repeated, in answer to the Squire's impulsive question: but no, certainly he was not. And she gave them this information.

When she returned after midday, she found M. Brown all impatience, waiting for her to show him the way to Monsieur Bourgois, that he might claim Madame's letter. When they reached the place, it had only the fille de boutique in it. Monsieur the patron was out, making a promenade, she said: he might be home possibly for the shutting-up at two o'clock.

Upon that, M. Brown decided to make a little promenade himself until two o'clock: and Mathilde, she made a further promenade on her own account: and had now come up, before two, to get the door open. Such was her explanation. If the gentlemen would be at the trouble of sitting down in the salon, without doubt M. Brown would not long retard.

They sat down. The clock struck two. They sat on, and the clock struck three. Not until then did any thought arise that Clement Pell might not keep faith with them. Mathilde's opinion, freely expressed, was that M. Brown, being strange in the town, had lost himself amid its mazes. She ran to the grocer's shop again, and found it closely shut up: evidently nobody was there.

Four o'clock, five o'clock; and no Mr. Brown. They gave him up then: it seemed quite certain that he had given them the slip. Starving

with hunger, exploding with anger, the Squire took his wrathful way back to the hotel: Mr. Brandon was calm and sucked at his magnesia lozenges. Clement Pell was a rogue to the last.

There came to Mr. Brandon the following morning, through the Boulogne post-office, a note; on which he had to pay five sous. It was from Clement Pell, written in pencil. He said that when he made the agreement with Mr. Brandon never a thought crossed him of not keeping faith: but that while he was waiting about for the return of the grocer who held his wife's letter, he saw an Englishman come off the ramparts—a creditor who knew him well and would be sure to deliver him up, were it in his power, if he caught sight of him. It struck him, Clement Pell, with a panic: he considered that he had only one course left open to him—and that was to get away from the place at once and in the quietest manner he was able. There was a message to Mr. Todhetley to the effect that he would send him the hundred pounds later if he could. Throughout the whole letter ran a vein of despairing sadness, according with what he had said to Mr. Brandon, and the Squire's heart was touched.

"After all, Brandon, the fellow *is* to be pitied. It's a frightful position: enough to make a man lose heart for good and all. I'm not sure that I should have taken the hundred pounds from him."

"That's more than probable," returned old Brandon drily. "It remains a question though, in my mind, whether he did see the creditor and did take a panic: or whether both are not invented to cover his precipitate departure with the hundred pounds."

How he got away from the town we never knew. The probability was, that he had walked to the first station after Boulogne on the Paris railroad, and there taken the evening train. And whether he had presented himself again at Monsieur Bourgois', that excellent tradesman, who did not return home until ten on Sunday night, was unable to say. Any way, he held the letter yet in safety. So that the chances are Mr. and Mrs. Pell are still dodging about the earth in search of each other, after the fashion of the Wandering Jew.

And that's a true account of our visit to Boulogne after Clement Pell. Mr. Brandon calls it to this hour a wild-geese chase: certainly it turned out a fruitless one. But we had a lucky voyage back, the sea as calm as a mill-pond.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

ONLY A SPRIG OF JASMINE.

IT was mid-day in the height of summer. The sun was blazing from a cloudless sky. The stems of the stone pines in the Grand Ducal gardens gleamed like burnished copper in the glare. The roses were fainting with the heat, and scattering their petals in soft-scented showers. Only the rows of tall pyramidal cypresses stood cold and sombre as when they watch over graves. The birds were silent in their coverts; not so the noisy cicadas, that kept up an incessant chaffer; and now and then the light thud was heard of an over-ripe pear or plum falling to the ground.

It was a sleepy time; besides it was really the hour of siesta, and Paolo, one of the under gardeners, gladly laid aside his tools, and threw himself down under a canopy of vines twined and twisted about the boughs of a spreading ilex tree. Though Paolo could rest from hoeing and digging, he could not sleep. Thought was too busy in his anxious brain. He was poor and in love; and Paolo was not the first who had found that situation insupportable.

The girl he loved was as poor as himself. She lived with a widowed aunt; and the two women managed to support themselves by silk spinning. Paolo's wages and Bona's earnings together would not maintain a household; besides, Paolo did not wish that when he married, his wife should spend her days in spinning silk. Yet the day when he might be able to support her in comfort seemed so far off! No wonder he was sad, and that sleep would not always come when he laid himself down for his siesta.

How he hated those noisy cicadas! The little selfish, unsympathizing creatures, that went on chattering about their delight in the sunshine, as if there were no such being as Bona in the world! Paolo pelted the tree with unripe grapes to silence them, but he only made himself hotter, and soon wearily laid his head back again on his clasped hands. There was a strange, powerful fragrance round the spot Paolo had chosen for his resting place. Just on the other side of the ilex tree was an alcove, the Grand-Duchess's favourite place of resort. A favourite place it well might be, commanding as it did a view of the lovely Val d'Arno, and the distant hills. Round the pillars that supported the roof of the alcove, and all along the frieze, clung a rare variety of jasmine just imported from Goa. Its flowers were pink-tipped, and nearly twice the size of the ordinary jasmine, and its scent was delicious. The Grand-Duchess had no particular love for flowers, but she prized this, not because it was beautiful and sweet, but because it was rare; and the Grand-Duke had given orders that none of the gardeners, on pain of dismissal, should presume to give or sell a slip from the Duchess's jasmine-tree.

The drowsy influence of the heat was just beginning to get the better of his brooding fancies, when Paolo thought he heard his name called.

"It is old Renzo," he said to himself. "He has no right to disturb me at this hour. Why cannot he take his own rest and be quiet?"

But again the voice sounded nearer. "Paolo, Paolo, where art thou then?"

It was a deep, manly voice, certainly not the half-cracked falsetto of Messer Renzo, the head gardener, as Paolo perceived as soon as he was wide awake.

"Here!" answered Paolo back again, rising to his feet at a fresh summons; "who wants me?"

A quick, firm tread sounded on the gravel walk, and presently the ilex boughs that concealed Paolo's resting place were put aside, and a tall, broad-shouldered young man, bronze-visaged, and black-moustached, stepped on to the sward where Paolo stood in expectation.

"Why, lad, thou art as hard to find as a needle in a bottle of hay," exclaimed the new comer, with a hearty slap on the young gardener's shoulder.

"Beppo! is it possible? Hast thou fallen from the skies?" was Paolo's response.

"Nay," replied the other, laughing. "I'm no skylark, not I. I like to keep my feet on good mother earth; it is enough to do that without tripping in these troublous times. If one comes off with a well filled purse, and a whole skin—why well. If not, a bullet makes short entrance to a better world, as the priests call it, though I do not see that they are in any greater hurry to get there than we sinners."

"But in sober seriousness, Beppo mio, where have you been these three years past, and where have you come from?"

"In sober seriousness—from the wars."

"Per Dio, but I'm heartily glad to see thee back again, old comrade; and with a whole skin as thou sayest."

"Aye, and that is not all," answered Beppo, with a twinkling eye, as he drew out a long purse, through the meshes of which gleamed gold coin.

The blood seemed to tingle in Paolo's veins at the sight of the coin. Where that came from was there not more to be had? How long should he have to toil at spade and hoe before he could save even one of those gold pieces?

Beppo noticed Paolo's changing colour, and laughed again. "I fancy thou hast never found a pot of gold amongst thy flower-roots, friend Paolo," said he; "'tis a sorry trade for such as thou. *Corpo di Bacco*, it's dry work talking, and here comes Messer Renzo," continued the soldier, lifting his cap to the old man as he approached. "Hark

ye, Paolo; I and some of our fellows will be down at Gabbia's osteria this evening. Come and take a glass of the Padrone's best; though, by my soul, it's but sorry stuff after the vintages of Burgundy. Then thou shalt hear how to better thy fortune if thou hast a mind. Dunque a riverderti." So saying, Beppo strode off to the gates of the garden, humming the air of a drinking song as he went along.

Old Renzo was rather deaf, and had not distinctly heard all that passed; but he shook his head as he watched the retreating figure.

"There goes a good-for-nothing," he said. "Beppo was always an idle scamp. Don't let him mislead thee, lad. War is a barren tree, and bears no good fruit." Renzo gave Paolo some directions for work to be done, and then hobbled off again towards the roses that were the delight of his life.

Beppo had returned to his native place with a recruiting party. He did not find it at all necessary to state that the money he threw about him so plentifully was not all his own; nor in describing the freedom and jollity of camp life, did he dwell on the reverse side of the picture. Paolo was restless and discontented. He listened with eager ears to the prospect held out to him; it is so easy to believe what we wish. He was obliged to acknowledge to himself that the parting from Bona would be hard,—but was not cruel poverty separating them as it was? And in a few years—a very few years perhaps—the fortune of war might shower some such rich booty into his lap as that Beppo had so lavishly displayed.

It was thus Paolo argued with himself. The soldiers took care to ply him with wine, while they talked. His imagination was dazzled; his better sense laid to sleep; and, in fine, when the party separated for the night, Paolo had pledged himself to enlist.

Old Renzo shook his head when he heard on the following morning what had occurred, but it was too late to interfere, and Paolo was determined to make the best of it, and to look only on the hopeful side. Perhaps he had been rash—that much he allowed; but some change he had been determined to make; and the sooner he left, the sooner he would return.

One painful task remained to him; the task of telling Bona what he had done. He was to meet her that evening. It was her fête day, and she would be released for a few hours from that everlasting silk spinning. Paolo's work was not very efficient that morning; it is to be feared the flowers suffered; his thoughts were elsewhere. At length the sun sank behind the stone pines. How often on festa days had he hailed the lengthening shadows; thinking of the evening dance and song, and the ramble in the cool shade, to be shared with Bona. But this afternoon, in spite of the hopes he was building upon his new career, his heart was heavy, and he almost felt as if the flowers he was gathering, as a name-day gift for Bona, were funeral flowers; for he

knew how her tears would fall on them when she heard that he was going far away from her, for years perhaps.

As he was passing the Duchess's alcove, on his way to the gates, the scent of the Indian jasmine came wafted towards him on the light, summer breeze. He hesitated a moment: "This is so sweet," he said to himself, "and pure and simple, like Bona's self. There can be no harm in gathering just one sprig; it is not like giving a cutting." As he reached up to pull a spray of the fragrant blossoms, he fancied he heard a step approaching. In his haste he tore off a larger piece than he had intended. As the step came nearer he did not stop to separate the flowering sprig from the green, but bending it up, he half buried it amongst the roses and carnations he held in his hand, and hurried away.

It is needless to dwell upon the scene that followed. Lovers have parted before, and will again, and the parting must always be the same—the same tearing asunder of two human hearts—the same inward bleeding—the same aching void. Bona kept Paolo's parting gift of flowers till they faded. But as she was sorrowfully placing her nose-gay in water, she took out the sprig of jasmine.

Paolo had told her its history; how much the Grand-Duchess prized it; and had held it up to her that she might inhale its delicious perfume. It had, therefore, an individuality for her beyond that of the other flowers, and in order to preserve the sprig as long as possible, she determined to place it in a garden-pot full of light soil, such as Paolo had taught her to use in potting plants. First she picked off the flower-spray, and placed it in the centre; "that shall stand for our love, Paolo's and mine," she murmured. Then she slipped the little green offshoots from the long stem, and placed them round the edge of the pot, giving them pretty, fanciful names, such as *speranza*, *buona fortuna*, and the like.

She could scarcely distinguish anything but a maze of white and green, through the tears that would keep rising to her eyes; she touched the flowers with her lips in something between a kiss and a sigh, and then placed the pot, with its precious contents, in a shady nook on the window-sill of her little chamber, where the overhanging vines would shelter it from the burning sun.

Night and morning Bona watered her jasmine pot; but soon the flowers dropped off, and most of the sprays withered away. Two of them remained green however, and Bona would not part with them as long as a symptom of life was left. After a time, to her surprise and joy, tiny green points became visible on the stems as the old leaves dropped off: and Bona found that the two slips she had named *speranza* and *buona fortuna* had taken root, and were growing.

Never were plants tended with more loving care. It almost seems as if plants were gifted with some sort of sensibility, and were aware

when they are so tended—as if they bloomed in fuller beauty under the loving touch and the admiring eye. Winter passed, and spring came, and Bona planted out her jasmynes, one on each side the doorway, making a fence round their delicate stems to protect them from the goats, that were so mischievous among the young vines. As summer advanced, they, like their parent tree, became starred over with pink-tipped white flowers. As Bona sat at the door, spinning, she could perceive the sweet perfume, and almost felt as if they were whispering to her of Paolo, and bidding her be faithful, and have hope.

One afternoon, just a year after Paolo's departure, as Bona was sitting as usual in her doorway, spinning, a handsome carriage stopped before the cottage; a young and elegantly dressed lady looked out, and then signed to the footman to open the carriage door. She alighted, and, to Bona's great surprise, came forward as if to speak to her.

Bona recognized the Countess Guida Rinaldi, one of the most celebrated beauties and leaders of fashion at the Grand-Ducal court. Paolo had pointed her out to Bona in the casino, one festa day. It was whispered that the Countess Guida was no great favourite with the Grand-Duchess; certain it is that the Countess had requested a slip of the Indian jasmine, and had been refused. This refusal rankled in her heart, and of course made the possession of this plant an object of importance to her happiness. She could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses, when, returning by an unfrequented road from her country villa, she saw the jasmine of Goa growing at the doorway of a cottage. It is needless to say she determined to lose no time in purchasing the plants from the little silk-spinner.

Great was her surprise when her proposal was met by a modest but firm refusal. The Countess was vexed beyond measure. She would willingly have given the diamond ring from her finger for only one of the trees. At first she supposed Bona was only waiting for a higher offer; she raised the sum she at first proposed to give, but Bona was not to be moved. Bona did not wish to appear ill-natured to the noble lady, or merely obstinate; she therefore related her simple story, and why it was that she felt she could almost as soon part with her life as with her jasmine-tree. At the same time she gathered a few of the treasured flowers which she tendered for the Signora's acceptance.

Though the Countess Guida was a fashionable lady, she had a heart, and she was touched by Bona's story.

"The saints forbid that I should rob you of your buona fortuna," she said, kindly. "Rather would I help you to make it answer to its name. Can you not raise other slips from your trees? All that you can produce, I will purchase. See," she continued, drawing a gold coin from her purse, "if you bring me three plants when spring comes, you shall have one of these for each of them; is it agreed?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Bona, her eyes sparkling with joy. "It shall be as the noble lady wishes; but—" and a shadow of anxiety passed over her face as she spoke—"the Signora Contessa will not betray Paolo? She will not get him into difficulties with Messer Renzo?"

The Countess smiled. Messer Renzo seemed to her a person of very little consequence. She gave the required promise however. "And now, little Bona," she added, "I must make a stipulation in my turn. You must keep our bargain secret; and you must screen your jasmines so that they may not be seen from the road. I am to be the first possessor, remember." Then she returned to her carriage scarcely so well pleased as she would have been could she have carried the jasmine trees off with her in triumph.

As soon as the Countess Guida's carriage was out of sight, Bona prepared two flower-pots as before, and taking as many cuttings as the young trees could bear without injury, she set them once more in the shade upon her window-sill.

"Don't you be a fool and part with all your cuttings next spring, Bonina mia," said the aunt, who had overheard what had passed from the interior of the cottage; "the Signora Contessa will show her jasmine trees to every one; she will set the fashion, and you may sell your next year's cuttings for what you choose, or I am much mistaken."

II.

Five years passed; not one word had been heard from Paolo all this time. News travelled but slowly from country to country in those days. There had been wars and rumours of wars, but Bona, in her quiet cottage, heard but little of what was stirring in the world.

Bona's cottage was now embowered in jasmine; and the garden behind, instead of producing nothing but a few cabbages and straggling gourds, was stocked with rare roses, carnations, and other brilliant and sweet flowers. Ladies in carriages came for flowers and cuttings, and cavaliers turned their horses' heads towards Bona's cottage to procure bouquets for their partners in the evening—bouquets of which the jasmine, when in bloom, always formed a part.

As the aunt had foretold, it had become the fashion, and Bona was making her fortune. Suitors were not wanting, but her heart remained faithful to her early love. He it was who had brought her the "*buona fortuna*," and he, or no one, should share it. In vain her aunt chided, and called her foolish; told her she was wasting her best years for a man who was perhaps dead, or who at any rate had in all probability long ceased to think of her. Bona could not be persuaded. She would not believe that Paolo was dead; neither would she believe that he was faithless to her; her only answer to all arguments and solicitations was, that the "*buon Iddio*" would make all right in the end, and with this the aunt was fain to be content.

It was one evening in early summer ; a few of the jasmine flowers were already in bloom. The aunt, who was generally the market woman, had hurt her foot, so Bona had set out, basket in hand, to the suburbs to provide for the evening meal, and the coming day. The road was full of memories, and she lingered amidst the lengthening shadows. There was the cottage where Paolo had lodged ; yonder, the olive trees, beneath which they had so often sat on summer evenings ; that tall row of poplars marked the road by which Paolo used to return from his work ; and just before her the white walls of the cottage were visible through the acacia trees, where Beppo's mother still lived.

As Bona pensively walked on, taking in all these objects with eye and heart, she suddenly started, for coming out of a gate between the acacia trees she saw a figure she recognized. The man she saw was no longer jaunty and careless in mien ; no longer brave in attire. He was cadaverous and emaciated ; his clothes, faded and soiled with many a stain, hung loosely on his shrunken frame, and yet Bona knew him at once, and sprang towards him with a cry of mingled hope and fear.

"Beppo !" she exclaimed, breathlessly, "when did you come home ? and where is Paolo ?"

Beppo seemed inclined to shrink out of sight instead of answering, but Bona caught his arm with a firm grip. "Answer me, Beppo," she said ; "what have you done with Paolo ?"

"If you want Paolo," replied Beppo, sullenly, "you must seek him where I came from."

Bona heaved a sigh of relief. "He still lives, then ?"

"He still lived when I left ; that is all I know."

"But where ? and why has he not returned with you ?"

"He is in hospital, if you will know. We were discharged with other of our comrades ; he, with a gunshot wound through the knee, and I—well, never mind that. He's the luckier fellow, for he has got something of a pension to make up for a crippled knee——"

"Oh, never mind that !" interrupted Bona, in her impatience ; "tell me why he has been left behind—he is ill ? dying, perhaps ? Oh, Santa Maria, is it so ?" and her voice broke down as the terror seized upon her, that even now, just upon the point of return, he might have passed away for ever from her reach.

By close questioning, she drew from Beppo all the information he had to give. The poor discharged soldiers had not been sufficiently recovered from their wounds when they set out on their homeward journey ; fever had made havoc amongst them, and Paolo was now lying at death's door, in a hospital, a day's journey from Florence.

Bona flew, rather than ran, back to the cottage ; called upon a neighbour to beg her to see after her aunt in her absence ; put up a few things in a bundle ; plucked some jasmine sprays, wrapping some

damp moss round the stems to keep them fresh, and hurried towards Florence, where, as she expected, she found the husband of an old companion of hers, just starting for the frontier, with a load of wine-skins; he willingly gave her a place in his cart, and night saw her on her dreary way.

Hopes and fears kept chasing each other through her mind, and agitating her out of all power of calmness. The mules appeared to crawl; she frequently got down and walked, fancying she could the sooner reach her journey's end. Daylight seemed as if it had forsaken the earth; but at last the sun rose, and a few hours after, faint and sick with fatigue and anxiety, Bona descended from the cart, and inquired her way to the hospital.

Here a new obstacle awaited her. It was not the hour at which visitors could be admitted to see the patients; she must wait till three o'clock, the porter told her, in cold, business-like tones. Four hours to wait, when every nerve was on the rack! Bona burst into tears.

Did he know the name of Paolo Memmi? Bona asked; could he tell her—but her quivering lips refused to ask the question that was to decide the fate of all she held dear. She sank on a seat, overpowered by emotion.

A sister of mercy happened to be passing through the hall, and stopped to offer a word of consolation to the peasant girl, who seemed in such distress. Encouraged by the kind voice and manner of the good sister, Bona, in faltering accents, repeated her question, and urged her request.

"Paolo Memmi," repeated the sister. "A soldier, wounded, and ill with fever—oh, yes! I know him; he is in my ward. But try to calm yourself, my poor girl,—he is very ill; he is now asleep, and how he wakes may determine whether he is to live or die. But there is always hope: and the buon Dio watches over all."

"Oh, if I might but look at him once!" Bona implored. "I will be so quiet. I will make no noise; I will not speak, or even sob—only just to see him—when the hour comes for visitors it may be—too late."

She uttered the last words in a low voice, clasping her hands tight to keep down the hysterical weeping that had before overpowered her.

"You will be quite quiet? Yes; I see you have self-control," said the sister, regarding her compassionately. "I think you may be trusted; wait here, and I will see what can be done."

In a few minutes she appeared at the entrance to a corridor, and beckoned to Bona. Ascending a flight of stairs, she led the way along an upper passage, and opened the door of a ward, where many beds were ranged, side by side. Bona followed. At length, with a warning glance at Bona, her finger on her lips, the sister stepped behind one of the pallets.

Wan, worn, with the eyelids closed over the weary eyes, the dark hair clinging damp to the pale brow, one thin hand stretched over the coverlet, he lay, so aged, so altered, but yet Paolo still. Bona gazed through the tears she did not dare to shed; and then, softly placing the jasmine flowers she had brought with her on the pillow, she obeyed the nurse's gesture, and withdrew.

The subtle fragrance of the flower seemed to penetrate the senses of the invalid, and to give shape to his fever dreams; he evidently imagined himself once more in the Grand-Ducal gardens, and was deprecating the anger of Messer Renzo.

"It was only a sprig of jasmine, and it was for Bona," he murmured. Then, as if pleasant thoughts of home and of his old occupations had soothed his pain, his brow cleared, the restless tossing and moaning ceased; a placid smile stole over his worn face, and he slept peacefully.

The following day good news awaited Bona. Paolo's illness had taken a favourable turn, and he was out of danger.

"It would almost seem as if the scent of that strange flower you brought had called him back from death to life," said the good sister to the anxious inquirer.

Bona was soon obliged to return home; it was several weeks before Paolo was able to follow, and months before he recovered his strength. He remained lame, but not so much so as to be unable to work in the cottage garden, soon to be his, as well as Bona's. The next summer they were married; Bona's bridal wreath being composed of jasmine flowers.

Since that time the young girls of Tuscany wear the jasmine flower on their wedding day, either in wreath or bouquet; and it is a saying in Italy that "she who is worthy to wear a nosegay of jasmine is as good as a fortune to her husband."



OUT OF A JUNE ROSE.

I AM an old man now ; I was an old man then ; but if I reach the age of Methuselah, never shall I forget those two short weeks that Garnet Granville glorified. Yes, glorified : for what had life brought me before, what has it brought me since, compared to the bewildering bliss, the delirious happiness encircling those fourteen days ?

I am not as other men. Up to my twenty-first year I leaped and sang and danced with the best. An awful accident befell me then, and I was crippled for life. Years saw me confined to my bed, the victim of pain so excruciating that my soul was wrung with but one desire ; to drop this tortured load of clay and be at rest.

The mending was a slow process. It came at last, and I grew by degrees to be tolerably well, and as active as I should ever be in this life. My sister Eunice, the only relative I had in the world, had nursed me through the affliction. Friends helped us : and when I was well the question was what should I earn a living at. There were so few things I could do now.

Mr. Daniels, a wealthy farmer, who had been so good to me all along—perhaps because it was one of his horses that caused the mischief to me—offered to lease to me a pretty dwelling surrounded by productive flower and fruit gardens, if I would like to cultivate them for the market. Flowers had been a passion with me always ; and I thanked him with all my heart. So Eunice and I took up our abode there : she helping me out of doors, and doing fine needlework the rest of her time—which she found a ready sale for in the large town at a little distance. We prospered well. For I must say it, everybody respected David and Eunice Armitage.

The second year I put up a greenhouse, where we had roses even in midwinter to send into town by the train ; and many's the order that came to me written by dainty hands I never saw, calling for my choicest productions to deck the graceful heads that would never bend beneath my doorway. So the year stole by. The seasons to me were distinguished by sweet flowers that budded and bloomed : and the dulness and pallor of my life gave way to something very near akin to warmth and brightness. Never quite free from pain, never free from anxiety, yet the peacefullest hours I had then ever known came and compassed me around and about.

I call them peaceful because I was not alive to any great, wearing suffering, not because my soul was lifted up or made glad in them. At that time I was not aware that I had a soul—speaking of course only in reference of earthly love. The queenly rose, the golden-urned lilies, the

starry jessamine, the purple pansies, spoke chiefly to me of things material, much as I naturally loved them—of bread and cheese and house-rent. Looking upon them through the mists of life's long pain and penance, I noted little beyond the worm, the canker, the blight; and when my watchfulness succeeded in warding off these, and the perfect flower unfolded in my sight, I had to consider its market value before its beauty.

So I dug and tended, and plodded on, and was happy in a quiet uneventful way; and the years went on and on, and I reached my four-and-fortieth year. No memories of joyous youth brought warmth and tenderness to my solitary musings. I was only a plain, crippled man, aged before my time. Across the barren sands of my life I had crawled, as it were, to that sober age; and then my heart's long-lingering summer dawned; then my soul awoke.

It was the last week in May, and I was bedding out June roses. Working busily, for the spring had been very backward. Cold and rainy days had been succeeded by this warm, dry weather; and I was making what haste I could. How well I remember it! In my halting awkwardness, I had accidentally overturned a great potted bush ready for transplanting, all aflame with buds, and was trying to gather it up without disturbing more than necessary the dirt about the roots, when a low, sweet, fairy-like woman's voice stole on my ear in song.

"'Tis not the day-god's golden beam
That lures me forth to view;
For you I deck myself in green,
For you I bloom, for you."

Simple words enough, these; and I, at all times easily started, seemed to feel them as an electric thrill. Dropping both rose-bush and garden trowel, I turned to look. Perhaps the startling suddenness of the thing helped to impress me. Had the richest, rarest, queenliest rose in my greenhouse taken upon itself woman's form and come forth to greet me? So dazed I was by the vision that shone upon my dazzled sight, that this was actually my first thought. The lady, young and beautiful, was habited in green; and from under her filmy white veil there bloomed out a face, the like of which I had never before seen for sweetness and fascination.

"I see I have taken you by surprise," she said; and her voice had in it the ringing richness of chiming bells. "There is no one at the house; at least, I cannot make any one hear; so I boldly intruded into your garden. Do I speak to Mr. Armitage?"

I begged her pardon—saying that my sister had gone by train to the town. And all the while I could scarcely take my dazzled eyes from her face.

"I am the bearer of a little note from Mrs. Whythers," continued the young lady; holding it out with a hand dented with dimples, and white as my fairest lilies.

Mrs. Whythers was not a wealthy woman, but she was one of our best customers, for she loved flowers: and being very much of an invalid, always wanted them in her room. "They breathe my pain away," she would say quaintly, with a weary little smile she had. More than once I had been in town on purpose to see her. In taking the letter my awkwardness let it fall.

"Nay, don't you trouble; I will pick it up," said the young lady with pleasant readiness. But in stooping her gossamer veil caught in the rose-bush amid the thorns. My clumsy fingers (clumsy at such work as that) sought to free her: she gave me a laughing upward glance from her most beautiful eyes; and straightway my fingers lost what cunning they possessed.

"Your rose-buds have taken me prisoner," she said, her merry laugh rippling along the garden walks, and making my blood tingle with a thousand delicious stings. "There's nothing left for me but to set my feet down in this possession and take root. If I should, would you clip me to pieces little by little, as you do your other roses?"

My heart was beating hot and heavy in my throat, and I had no words wherewith to answer her. She untied her bonnet, gave her beautiful hair a dainty toss, and rose up the most lovely flower in my garden. I had seen very many women exceedingly fair to look upon, but never one like this.

"You have not read Mrs. Whythers' note, Mr. Armitage."

True. I opened it then. It was meant, I found, for myself and Eunice jointly.

"The bearer of this is Miss Granville. She has been visiting at my house. Circumstances having transpired that render it necessary she should leave, as her family is not ready to receive her, being from home, you would greatly oblige me if you could make it convenient to accommodate her for a week or two."

Such was the substance of it. It was signed tremulously, as if the writer's strength had given way just there. Too matter-of-fact to give way to fancy—or it might have struck me that there was something rather singular in the request—I turned the white page over and over while making a rapid inventory of our resources for the accommodation of this guest. We had two rooms down-stairs and three chambers above. So far, there was room. But my hesitation was caused by the thought of Eunice: would she be willing to take her? I feared not. And yet—how could I let this lovely lady go?

"I can say nothing, Miss Granville. My sister Eunice must decide."

"Oh, but I mean to come," she said with pretty petulance. "I have fallen in love with this charming place."

"There's Eunice!" I exclaimed with relief, as I saw her approach the entrance. "Will you kindly show her the note, Miss Granville?"

"That's Miss Armitage, is it?" cried the young lady lightly. And she

went up the path singing softly, the lilac trees bending to pour their fragrance on her golden hair. As for me—I looked after her like a man in a dream. What had come over me? Surely I was not myself that day.

Eunice came out presently, her face less hard than usual. How the young lady had contrived to win her over I know not; but she had done it.

"I think we must take her, David. She seems a nice sort of girl."

Nice sort of girl! She had seemed more than that to me.

"Yes, I should like her to come as she wishes it—and oblige Mrs. Whythers. I was only afraid you would think of the trouble, Eunice."

"How I do wish you'd look a body in the face when you speak, David. The rose-bush can't be in all that hurry to be planted, that you are unable to lift your head."

And I slowly rose at the reproof.

"As to the trouble, of course it will be a trouble, though she says *not*, and that she'll take her meals with us, and not be particular what they are," went on Eunice. "But she offers a handsome sum weekly, and we should not be justified in letting it go by. I shall have to give her up my best mattress, and take the hard one off the spare bed."

Which would be a great sacrifice for Eunice.

We went indoors together. Miss Granville met us at the parlour door.

"You will take me," she cried out to Eunice, with the sunny vivacity of a child. "Oh! yes, I know you will, for you smile now, and you did not before. I'm so very much obliged to you. It is so good of you to take me in at a pinch like this. I shall be with you before this time to-morrow. Perhaps some one will meet me at the station, as I shall be quite alone. Mr. Whythers is not coming with me."

"You are as well, maybe, without Mr. Whythers as with him, young lady," grunted Eunice in her hardest tones.

Miss Granville laughed. "Don't you like him?"

"I never saw him."

"Never saw Mr. Whythers!" she returned, gazing at Eunice with that intently bright gaze I already had by heart. "You know him, I suppose, Mr. Armitage?"

"No, I never saw him either," was my answer. "My business with them, such as it is, concerns Mrs. Whythers only, Miss Granville. If report speaks true, he is none too fond of lingering by his wife's side."

She looked at me for a minute in silence. And then moved to go.

"To-morrow then; adieu until to-morrow. I long for it to come, that I may have my home in this peaceful spot. I am tired of the world."

"You are young to be tired of the world," remarked Eunice. Her voice had caught some new, soft inflection as it addressed this beautiful stranger.

She turned her radiant face on Eunice. "Young? Oh no, I'm ever so old. I am almost twenty."

Twenty and ten is thirty, and ten forty, and four is forty-four, came surging through my brain.

"And I am forty: but I don't count myself so very old," said Eunice.

"Nor should I if I could spend my days in this charming place of flower-beds. I should want to live to see a hundred. When I come back to-morrow, will you take me all over it?—in every nook and corner of it?"

This to me.

"Yes, you shall see all over it, Miss Granville."

"Well, good-bye once more," she said, hastening away. "If I don't mind, I shall lose my train."

Eunice went to open the gate for her; and we saw her run up to the station. I was standing like a rock, conscious of one thing only—the bewildering vision that was flitting from my sight, and seemed verily to have been turning my brain. From that moment I never thought of her but as "my June rose."

"Did you finish bedding out the yearlies, David?"

The crisp to-business-with-you tones, striking on my excited nerves, together with what had just happened, chafed me.

"No," I replied, "I wish you'd finish them yourself."

Accustomed to the impatience born of my fiery pain, she said nothing, and went out.

I followed her, thinking of that beauteous blush-rose, in whose presence the rest of the roses faded into nothing. Eunice and I were a quiet couple; quiet from habit, not from incompatibility of mind and temper, for we got on quite well together usually. So, though we worked through the rest of the day in silence, almost shoulder to shoulder, I had ample opportunity to think over my new thoughts, and for the first time in my life to dream dreams.

Mr. Whythers had the reputation of being a gay and gallant man, and was said to be slowly breaking his wife's heart. It struck me that the house was scarcely one for her to be much at—considering her youth and beauty—and that her friends should have thought twice before sending her on a visit there. He was very attractive, gossip ran; and she, poor wife, was confined to her own room three parts of her time. The thought crossed me—was Mrs. Whythers sending her young guest away from danger?

The morning rose, bright and lovely: and my foolish mind was still full of that gay girl, who had flitted across my path for a few minutes, just as some rare butterfly flits across arid sands, and is seen no more.

I was bending over the strawberry bed towards mid-day. Rising to straighten myself—I had to do it often—a kind of procession burst on

my astonished sight : Miss Granville was being escorted down from the station. Arriving alone, everybody who happened to be lounging there to watch the train in (Eunice among them) had offered to attend her. The wealthiest man of our neighbourhood, Mr. Stokes, who was called Squire sometimes; the station master; Sam Daniels; and a porter with her luggage.

She was in silver-grey. A beautiful dove, darting hither and thither in much fear of losing one of her possessions, talking and laughing with them all, and thanking them for the trouble they took—her hat was wreathed with ivy leaves; her beautiful hair was shining. What will you think of me for noting these trifles? I who never before could have told whether a woman was dressed in red or blue, silk or stuff. Bear with me : these memories are precious.

I did not go to meet them. I bent over my strawberry bed with feverish anxiety; and kept my head down. By-and-by the gate opened, and I knew by instinct who it was coming.

"Mr. Armitage?—oh, I see you. How are you to-day?—and how busy you are! Can I help you?"

Up went the soft grey dress, revealing a snowy petticoat of frills, and the prettiest foot in the world. Down she bent, and began to "help."

"Is that a weed? Is that—and that?" she asked, her dimpled hand lighting here and there as she pointed, with such great bewilderment to me that I said yes when I meant to say no: and out came one of my choicest seedlings, with a jerk.

"Oh! you've got me into mischief," she screamed, half penitent, half laughing. "Don't look at me, Mr. Armitage! I'll not attempt to help you any more."

Not look at her, when head, heart, eyes swam with her image? I let her step away; neither speaking nor raising my head.

"Are you angry with me?" she asked softly.

"Angry!" I said, rising then. "Don't think so for an instant, Miss Granville. I am nothing but a gruff gardener—I could not be angry with you."

She held a bit of her silken hair across her lips in thought; her eyes were bent down on mine with that bright, intent look beneath their long lashes.

"I don't want to hear you call yourself names," she said.

"I call myself just what I am."

"Nonsense! You were not always meant to be a gardener, were you?"

Even from her the question brought me bitter pain. She stood, looking downward, absently turning a beautiful diamond round and round her finger.

"At one time I thought I should never live to be anything, Miss Granville."

"Yes : I felt so sorry," she gently said. "Mrs. Whythers told me all about it."

With every word she spoke, with every look she gave, I drank in deeper draughts of love. Alas, that I should have to confess it. The utter fool that I shall be called by those who read the page ! There's only one excuse—that it was true : and that I did not bring it on myself. The glamour had overpowered me, mind, and heart, and senses, before I ever suspected it was there.

"I must go in and write a letter," she said, turning away. "I'll come out to you again."

David Armitage, gardener, did little work that day or the next. Whether she was present or absent, I found her radiant presence everywhere ; rambling down my garden walks, flitting, humming-bird-like, before my eyes, rioting through my brain, upsetting the deep, strong gravity born of years, penury, and pain ; waking in its stead the lifeful throbs of ecstatic youth and ardent manhood.

The days came and went. Her morning shawl trailed its rose-coloured folds just wherever it had pleased her to drop it from her shoulders ; her garden hat, her snowy muslin apron, with its dainty frilled pockets, might be seen anywhere. Eunice would grumble at the litter. To me the evidence of her presence somewhere was a continual feast. She made herself delightfully at home ; and seemed to treat us with as much respect as though we had been a king and queen. It was impossible not to become socially intimate with her. Eunice even took to call her by what she told us was her Christian name, "Garnet."

"Were you really christened Garnet?" I asked her one day, marvelling at the curious name.

"Garnetta. They say Garnet for short at home. Mamma never calls me anything else."

"Garnetta is a very uncommon name."

"An old aunt picked it up out of a romance for me, I believe. She must have been given to read them—like Mrs. Primrose."

"Who's Mrs. Primrose?" cried Eunice, looking up from her wool-work. Miss Granville laughed.

"Hush, Eunice," I said, feeling my face flush. "I read the book to you once : 'The Vicar of Wakefield.'"

We did not learn much about Miss Granville's family. They lived in the great city, more than a hundred miles away from us. Her father was dead ; and it seemed to be, judging by remarks she let drop, a scrambling, careless, extravagant sort of household. Her mother had married again, and was lost in gaiety, letting Garnet go her own way.

The first cloud that crossed this new heaven of mine—and it was heaven to me—occurred on the fifth day after Miss Granville's arrival. Visitors came in to drink tea with us. One was old Mrs. Daniels,

Sam's grandmother; the other was Mr. Stokes. Mr. Stokes came ostensibly for a bouquet; but he did not seem inclined to betake himself away again. He stayed and stayed, leaning back on our chintz sofa and casting sheepish glances at Garnet—who sat weaving an ivory hook in and out of an amber cloud—speaking no word except to me. Once or twice she lifted those radiant orbs to him, once or twice shrugged her shoulders at some remark of his, that was all; yet I knew he was admiring her all the while—adoring her, perhaps, as I was. When I gave him the flowers—and he was very particular about their arrangement—he laid them on Garnet's lap, and left suddenly.

After tea, according to her custom, she folded her rose-coloured shawl about her, and, swinging her hat by its little elastic string, trailed her white robes down the green slope, and turned towards the grove of oaks that skirted a portion of Daniels' farm.

I can see it now; that light, floating figure, the quiet country landscape, and the sun's golden glory in the west.

She flitted on, along the path, through the broken fence-rails into the meadow, loitering by the stream, and finally disappearing within the green oak shadows. Then I became aware that Mrs. Daniels was watching her too. The old lady turned round with a kind of flick.

"It is my opinion that young person wants looking after."

"What do you mean?" asked Eunice.

"She goes over into that coppice every night, does she not?"

"I think so. She is glad of a walk: and I have no time to go with her. It is less public there than the open road."

Old Mrs. Daniels sniffed. "Well, she goes to meet some gentleman."

Eunice opened her eyes in surprise. For myself, I could not speak.

"It's true," said Mrs. Daniels. "Three times my grandchildren have come home at dusk and said they saw her. He's some tall, well-dressed dandy of a man. It did puzzle me to wonder what on earth a fashionable girl like her could want boarding in your house."

My back gave a wrench that brought with it a pang like death. I hardly know what I said in my anger.

"Highly tighty, David, what is it to you?" she cried, while Eunice gazed at me bewildered. "I don't say the young girl is getting into real mischief: I suppose you needn't fear that; but I do say she goes there to meet somebody, and there can be no doubt he's a sweet-heart."

"Mischief!—who is dreaming of mischief, Mrs. Daniels?" was my trembling answer. "But she is an innocent young girl—placed under my care—and it's not *likely* that she meets a sweetheart."

Taking my thick stick—which was encoiled round with silks belonging to Garnet's embroidery, and emptying my hat of her thimble and

scissors, which she had left in it, I went away down the house path : the last words of Grandmother Daniels' falling softly on my ear.

"Eunice ! I hope David's not losing his head."

"I'm sure I hope not," responded Eunice.

Do you want to know where I was going? Away to the oak cop-pice, to see for Garnet with my own eyes and prove the old lady a slanderous liar. Alas ! for my peace of mind !—for the blight that fell upon me. He was a fine, handsome man of thirty ; and he walked with his arm around Garnet's waist ; and I saw him bend down his face and kiss her. I limped home again ; and went to work in my garden as if life depended upon it. Before I had worked long, a revulsion set in, and I felt sure that there was nothing wrong, that what I had seen would be explained away. Mrs. Daniels waited indoors ; intending, I supposed, to have it out with Garnet. I could think no evil of the child : in my mind she was spotless as an angel. Her wings might be lifting to fly from me ; but they were angel wings, let them soar whither they would.

She came at last, my June rose, looking in the twilight fair as the fairest lily. I heard her afar in the dewy evening hush, trilling over to herself a gay little song ; I saw her white dress sweeping the purple gloom on the grass. She came up to me in the garden, standing still.

"Tired, David?" For she had learned to call me as Eunice called me.

"Not tired with work, dear."

She turned to go in, and I followed. Grandmother Daniels had already begun.

Garnet stood white as death, listening to the accusation : her face had a look of fright in it, her fingers pulled at the rose-coloured fringe of her shawl. Suddenly she burst into tears.

"Oh don't, don't ! I'll tell you about it. Mr. Armitage, *you* know better. I'll tell you all. He is my brother ; and we are very wretched."

Her brother ! Grandmother Daniels sat down in a heap on the easy-chair.

Yes, he was her brother, she told us. He had fallen into some trouble and had come all the way from home to see and talk to her. He did not care to be seen just now by the world, so he lodged in the town quietly, and came over to meet her in the evening. It was through their not being able to meet at Mrs. Whythers' that induced her to leave and come to this secluded place.

Listening to this, I was full of remorse for having wronged her in my mind only for a moment. We told her to let her brother come to the house in future, or into the garden : she thanked us, but said the cop-pice was more private, and he never stayed long. Mrs. Daniels went home a little crestfallen.

"But a good name is sooner lost than gained, child," she said to her. "The world won't know he is your brother. I'd advise him to get his business with you over and go."

After that night Eunice said to me that she'd be satisfied to see her go too. It was most unreasonable of Eunice—but she took up crotchets sometimes. In the afternoon we read the address on a note she left on the table: "Arthur Granville, Esq."

Satisfied to see her go! I dared not think of it. How could I live and see that glory drift out of my life, and my days take on their cold, dull, neutral tints again? I put away from me all thought of it as far as I might, and revelled in the present with the warmth and joy of a child on a holiday. Surely, surely this glory had not been borne upon the hilltops to fade wholly, and leave me treading my dreary valley ways, footsore and heartsore, down into that darkest valley of all, whereon rests the shadow of death. Thus I deluded myself, and, though I knew what a senseless fool I was, I hugged the delusion all through the long, dear days that saw her under our roof. Never for one instant did I presume to think of wooing or winning her. I!—all I could hope was, that I should not quite lose her for ever; that the sunshine of her smile might glance upon me from time to time, and keep my heart alive in the winter years coming. I even began to think, when Mr. Stokes repeated his visits, that it would be a comfort to see her settled in the large house on the hill, and her children growing up around me.

After the night I saw her in the woods, a change came over her. In the presence of Eunice she made as much of me as ever, but no longer sought me in the garden to hover about me like some bewitching humming-bird, and bewilder me with her bright ways and tuneful voice. But so filled was every sense with her radiant image, I cannot even say I missed her. Then, too, she was mostly seated somewhere where I had but to turn my head to make that image real.

The day came, as such days will, when she left us. Her trunks were taken to the station in the morning and sent away by the up-train. In the evening, a carriage came bowling down the hill slope and stopped at the gate. She had been waiting for it feverishly—I had watched her as few save the dying are ever watched.

"There's Arthur!" she exclaimed. And I caught sight of her brother, Mr. Granville.

"Good bye, Eunice," she said. "Thank you for all. Mr. Armitage—David, don't be sorry I am going. Good bye."

She lifted up her face to me, and I kissed it, once, twice, thrice. No one in this world knows what those kisses were to me. Mr. Granville folded a cloak round her, drew the windows up; the sound of the carriage was lost in the distance: and sunshine had alike gone out of my heart and life.

On the third day after Miss Granville's departure, old Grandmother Daniels and her daughter-in-law came strolling over to talk to Eunice about some work. It was in the full heat of the day, and I was resting a bit under the shade of the portico.

"Well I declare! you are going to have another visitor, Eunice!" cried the old lady, interrupting a calculation as to some yards of lawn. "Who is it coming along?"

Eunice shaded her hand and I shaded mine—and saw, walking painfully as one does who is sick and faint, Mrs. Whythers. Eunice ran to offer her arm. I stood up to let them go in, and Mrs. Whythers just touched my hand with a sickly smile.

"Ill? worse? Yes, David, I am both. Life is very hard to bear just now, and it tells upon me."

Sitting in the porch, I heard it all. All. They had put her in the corner of the chintz sofa, and given her a cup of milk: and she spoke. The whole town knew of it then, and she had come out to us to ask questions. A sickening sense of faintness, of helpless despair, grew upon me as I listened.

The gentleman who had come over to meet Garnet Granville in the grove, with whom she had gone away, was not her brother, but Mr. Whythers.

It was a wicked tale. He was bad, and she—though I have to say it—was a hypocrite. She had no brother. But oh—was she not to be excused? Exposed to the companionship of that attractive and most unscrupulous man, day after day, day after day, during her three months' stay with Mrs. Whythers, she had learned to love him with the passionate idolatry that *I* felt for *her*. They were together nearly always of necessity, for Mrs. Whythers was confined to her room three parts of her time: he took her out, she entertained company (or the two together) for Mrs. Whythers at home. She, the wife, awoke to a suspicion of danger too late. Then she spoke to her young guest, telling her for her own sake she must go home. Garnet played the hypocrite there as well as later. She appeared all innocence; could not understand what was meant, she said; she was quite willing to go away, but not home—for she knew home was not ready to receive her. So then it was arranged that she should come to us for a fortnight, until the home was ready—Mr. Whythers to be allowed to think she had finally departed.

I knew the rest. They had gone away together. One of the cruellest elements in it all to me was that the ladies, Daniels, should hear this. But the whole town was talking of it—the country soon would be.

"He has come over every night of his life all that fortnight, and she has met him in our oak grove!" cried the grandmother. "Mrs. Whythers, she said he was her brother, Arthur Granville."

"She never had a brother."

"And I misdoubted me all along that something was wrong," put in Eunice. "She's a *despicable* girl—as bad as he is!"

A sickness like death came over me. Moving away from the misery of the voices, I went to a distant part of the garden, and lay down behind the hothouse in a misery of despair that it is not often given to man to feel.

I lay there till the people had gone and it was nearly nightfall. Eunice came out calling "David, David!" but no David answered her. Wandering away then, for I could not yet face even her eyes, I found myself crossing the platform at the station. A train was coming up; there was a rush of passengers; I was pushed, and—fell.

After that dark day came weeks and weeks of hospital life. At first I saw nothing but the white ceiling overhead, and now and then a face bending between that and me. I don't know which was the worst—the pain of body or of mind. Then I began to mend.

In the next bed to mine was a sufferer named Nathan Arnold: a patient, grave, sweet-tempered man. One day his little girl—he was a widower and had but the one—came in, bringing a tiny bunch of roses. Where they came from I do not know, for the ground was white with snow—but I caught sight of their bloomy faces afar down the narrow passage between the little cots.

"Roses!" I cried out in an agony such as no pain ever forced from me. "Don't let her bring them here! Don't let her bring them here!"

It was very foolish of me that burst of remembrance—but the sight of the flowers had brought that old time before me: and I was grievously weak.

A great friendship sprang up between myself and Arnold. As we sat up together he taught my poor, blind, despairing soul to look up to those holy hills from whence cometh all our help.

Never shall I forget those long spring afternoons, with the sunshine coming and going in golden tides on the white beds and whiter faces, Arnold's low voice quoting from memory all that was comforting and beautiful in that most beautiful and comforting of all books, the Bible. He was a plain man, but at these times there was a charm in his face no earthly beauty could impart; a light in his eyes that seemed to me must be like the light that comes over the faces of those who are beneath heaven's portal.

When I left the hospital it was as an altered man, in more senses than one. They had to carry me out: for my feet would not bear me: they never will bear me again until I touch the shining shore. I learnt basket making: the fine delicate baskets that ladies favour. All day long I sat and wove the slim willow strands into dainty devices for daintier hands to trifle with, yet was never lonely, seldom sad. The

scent of the flowers was again my delight : and they brought the blossoms and laid them beside me that I might look on them while I worked. Eunice had married Nathan Arnold, and they and the little girl and I live together in the old home amidst the rose-garden. Thus another year or two went on.

June came round again — sifting her sands of golden sunshine through my open window, filling the air with her sweet scents of hay, and woodbine, and lilies. I was sitting out of doors one day in the seat they had improvised for me, my fingers hard at work, my lips repeating that favourite verse that *I* could so well realize, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes," when there came swiftly down the slope from the direction of the station a young woman poorly clad, who carried a small bundle in her arms. Young women were no longer anything to me ; I bent my straw hat down upon the delicate willows again, and lost myself in a vision of what the next world would be. I often had those comforting visions now.

"Mr. Armitage ! David ! Don't you know me ?"

Know her ! I knew the voice, and that was enough ; I should never have known *her*. Her face was worn, thin, haggard—like a storm-beaten lily.

I could not rise ; but I managed to push back the chair a little. "Yes—I know you now. Miss Granville."

"I am Mrs. Whythers," she said, correcting me. "The moment he could make me his wife, he did."

And I ought to have mentioned before this that poor Mrs. Whythers, the first wife, had died within a month or two of the flight which had put the final snap to her breaking heart. The day after he received the news he married Garnet Granville. No blessing had rested on the marriage : it was not to be expected that it would.

She knelt down at my knee. "David—oh, let me call you so !—don't look so harshly at me."

Was I looking harshly ? I did not know it. "My poor lamb !" I said. "My poor, worn, weary lamb !"

"Weary alike of the world and of my life," she moaned. "My husband has in turn left me for another. It is only just. And, David, I am dying."

I tried to answer, but a sob caught the words.

"Not dying of his cruelty ; but of what my own father died of when I was a child—consumption," she continued, her voice taking a hard tone. "I did not expect to live to get here. David"—with a whisper—"you remember our going to church together that one Sunday—can you tell me what the text was ?"

Ay, I could. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

"To me, a sinner ; me, a sinner," she repeated. "God be merciful to me—to me—a sinner !"

Oh what a sobbing voice it was ! Opening her arms, there peeped out a pretty baby, who had the blue eyes of its mother.

"I want you and Eunice to take care of her, David Armitage. At least as long as they'll let you. And perhaps *he* won't care where she is. There's money ; my money ; more than she'll want : it will all be hers, not his. Her name is the same as mine, Garnet. And, David—I—I am faint," she broke off. "I—I think it's death."

I saved the baby, and called out for Eunice. She slid down, and lay on the ground. The more I called, the less any one came. I saw the struggle, and I could not do anything to help her.

"Mercy upon us !" cried Eunice, coming out at last, and lifting her hands up, covered with flour. "Why, David, what's all this ?"

On the garden walk, which her feet had trodden so often in her girlhood's pride and beauty, lay Garnet Whythers, *dead*. Her bonnet had fallen off, and her beautiful hair trailed on the gravel. Eunice took up the baby.

They let the baby stay with us. The other day her pretty feet came tripping up to me.

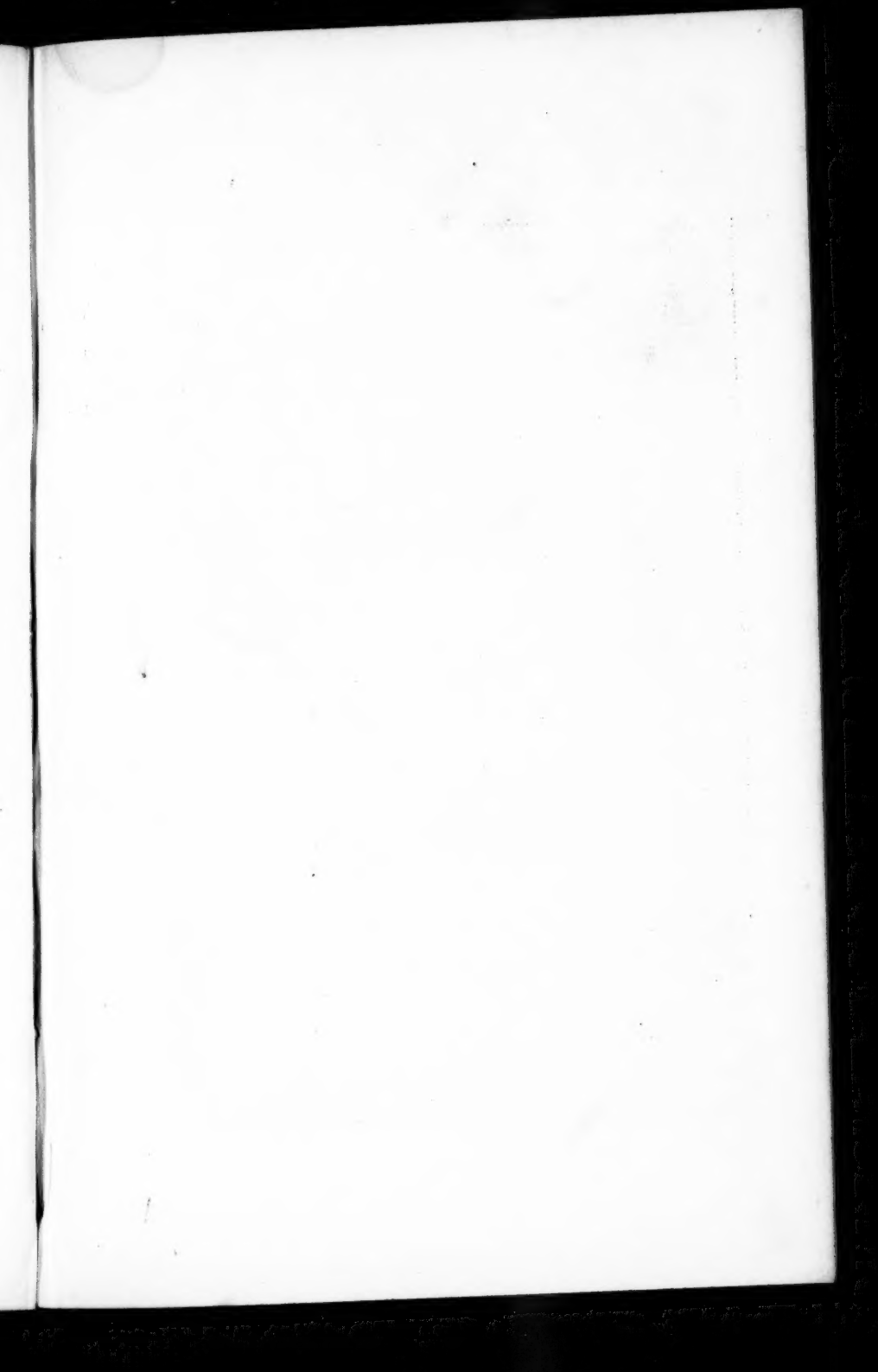
"What you doing, Uncle David ?" she lisped—for so she was taught to call me.

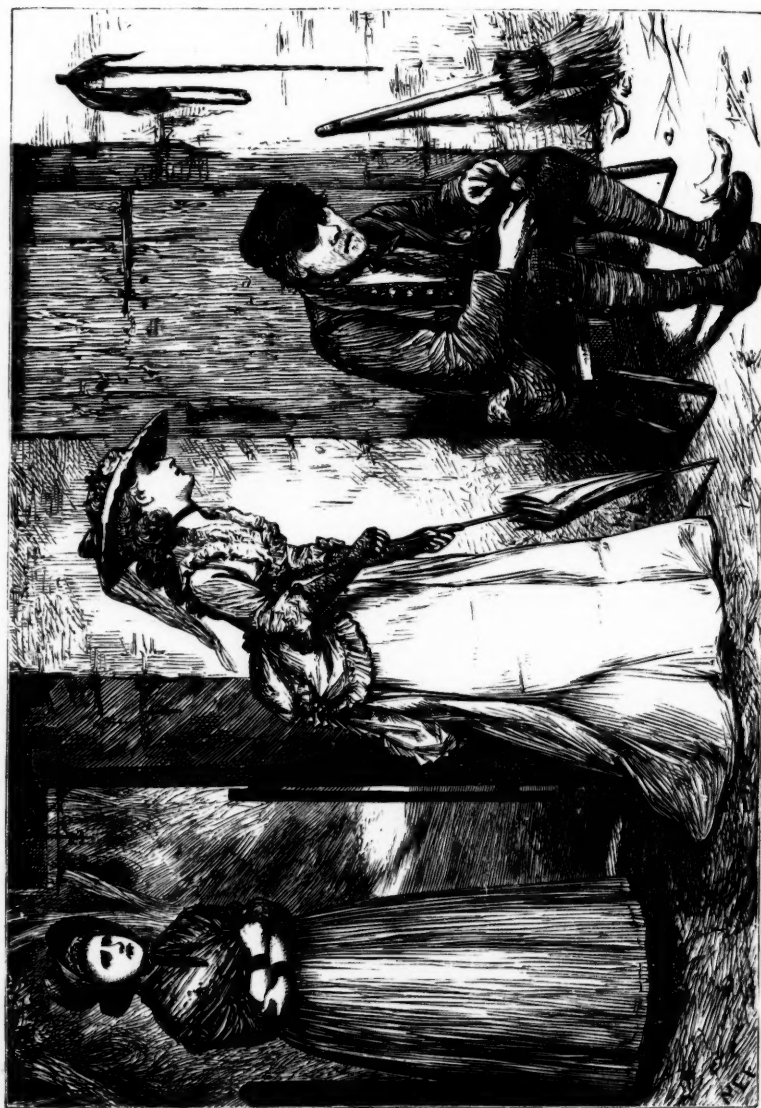
"Writing a story, my little darling."

"A 'tory ? Where you det it from, Uncle David ?"

"Out of a June rose."







M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

CALLING ON RANDY BLACK.

EDMUND EVANS.